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Free election

THE CABINET, meeting under Prime Minister Atef Sidki yesterday, discussed arrangements for the People's Assembly elections, scheduled for 29 November, and listened to briefings, from the prime minister, on President Mubarak's recent visits to Washington and Damascus, and from Interior Minister Hassan El-Alfi, on the security situation, including the recent arrests of leading member of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, Information Minister Safwat El-Sherif stressed the government's commitment to conduct the coming elections in a free and democratic atmosphere.

IMF backing

THE BOARDS of directors of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have formally endorsed Egypt's position on not devaluating the Egyptian pound, announced Atef Ebeid, minister of the public sector and administrative reform, yesterday.

Ebeid said the endorsement took into account the success of Egypt's economic reforms which have resulted in liberalised trade, a balance of payments surplus and a 40 per cent increase in exports over the last year.

Ebeid said the two international institutions agreed to bolster Cairo's economic reforms by providing scientific and marketing experts to boost exports further. A new round of talks between Egypt and the two bodies is scheduled for next January, Ebeid said.

French fears

THE FRENCH Foreign Ministry yesterday renewed its call for all non-essential French nationals, including journalists, to leave Algeria a day after a bomb placed on a Paris underground train exploded, wounding 29 commuters. The bomb was the eighth since July.

Suspicious packages found on the same regional subway line of Tuesday's blast triggered an alert, as hundreds more troops were deployed in a nationwide security net. The daily *Le Parisien* summed up the mood with the front-page headline: "Paris is afraid."

Government officials refused to comment on a reported four-point ultimatum from the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) which has claimed responsibility for the bombing campaign. The GIA demands that France sever all ties and financial aid with Algeria.

Outbreak plan

THE UN World Health Organisation has started the first global programme for the fast containment of emerging diseases, like the Ebola virus. The programme also aims at the eventual prevention of such diseases by raising funds for research.

Dr David Heyman, the programme's head, told AP that he had started the programme on 1 October with a two-year budget of just $1.5 million. Its target, he said, was to be able to send doctors anywhere in the world within 24 hours of an outbreak of disease. It also hopes to establish early warning systems by funding special surveillance programmes.

INSIDE

Deportation frenzy

As Libya prepares to expel a million Africans, Julie Till, **writing from the Egyptian-Libyan border, reports on the plight of the Palestinians already deported**

A UN sanctions committee on Tuesday rejected a Libyan request to approve 2,200 flights so that Libya could deport more than one million Africans. Meanwhile, about 650 Palestinians, half of them children, were stranded on a ship off the Cyprus coast after Libya deported them and Syria refused to admit them.

According to Czech ambassador Karel Kovanda, the UN sanctions committee had decided that the Libyan application "would not fall under the humanitarian exceptions provided for in the relevant UN Security Council resolutions".

Libya, in its 4 October letter to the committee, called the Africans "illegal infiltrators" and asked for the flights to repatriate them "in order to avoid the hardships and dangers of travel created by the air embargo".

The UN Security Council imposed sanctions, including a ban on air travel and an arms embargo, in 1992, after Libya refused to surrender two suspects in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103 which crashed at Lockerbie. The blast killed 270 people.

Kovanda said Libya's request to deport over a million foreign nationals by air "would amount to more than 2,200 flights to their countries of origin in various parts of Africa".

Libyan officials indicated that they would repatriate the foreign nationals regardless of what the United Nations did.

"If Libya argues that if we don't allow them to be flown out of the country they will drive them out over the desert and therefore many would perish, then this is Libya's decision," Kovanda said. "Certainly Libya would meet an outcry from the international community."

The Cyprus-flagged ferry, Countess M, carrying the deported Palestinians, was allowed by Cypriot authorities to anchor off the southern port city of Larnaca on Tuesday to stock up on food and fuel, police said. But only a pregnant woman and her family have been allowed off the vessel.

Meanwhile contacts were underway with other Mediterranean countries to determine the deportees' next destination, police spokesman Savvas Antoniades said.

Thirty-year-old Abdel-Salim Ahmed was born in Syria. His wife was born in Lebanon. Their three children were born in Algeria, Iraq and Libya. The current address of this Palestinian family is one of the 100 or so khaki green tents in the no-man's land between the Libyan and Egyptian border at Salloum.

The latest, and smallest, of the Palestinian refugee camps was preparing to launch its next demonstration. The inhabitants of what they themselves have euphemistically called "The Camp of Return" were planning to block the border crossing for three hours. High profile tactics, they insisted, were the only way to keep the interest of the world's press. As 30-year-old Emad Mohamed explained "If we just sat here for 10 years who would see us?"

The planned closure was a scaled down version of their two-day border blockade last week when they threw rocks at passing cars and lay down across the road between the Libyan and Egyptian borders. Even short stoppages are immediately felt on this busy thoroughfare. The ban imposed on air flights to and from Libya three years ago has made the Salloum border post a crucial outlet to the outside world. Every day around 200 vehicles pass through both sides of the border, according to security officials at the Egyptian border.

Last Tuesday's events got out of hand — with the Palestinians and Egyptian security officials trading accusations as to who was to blame for a truck being set on fire and the burning down of a number of tents on the camp's frontline. The flare-up added to the misfortune of one family who lost not only their clothes and other belongings packed into suitcases, but also the few precious papers which may have one day allowed them to return to Palestinian soil.

For their young son, sitting in a pair of skimpy shorts, there were more immediate needs. He simply wanted his mother to finish washing his one remaining set of clothes before the sun went down. When night does fall, the searing heat which plagues the Palestinian deportees by day in this barren piece of land directly in front of the Libyan customs post is supplanted by a cold dampness which seeps through young and old bones alike.

What then brings these people here? There is no doubting the sincerity of their wish to return to Palestine. Ahmed is not alone when he says he has had enough, of being pushed from one country to another: "If there was another place to go, even heaven, I would refuse." There is a sense of urgency in his voice. His fear is that the PLO-Israeli agreement on self-rule will leave him, and the four million other Palestinians in the diaspora, outside and stranded.

In a neighbouring tent, Firyal Ali Mohamed Jaber, with her suitcases, boxes and blankets piled high against its walls, echoes the sentiments of the Libyan leader Muammer Gadaffi in wanting to put the peace protest to the test. "I want to return to Palestine. There is a president, there is an authority, there is peace. We are Palestinian and we want to return."

Firyal, her husband and four children came to Libya five years ago from Al-Arish in Egypt. They wanted to take advantage of the free education offered to Palestinians by the Libyan government. But things are changing in Libya too. Its open door policy is being closed. Around 30,000 Palestinians have already been expelled. Egyptian and Sudanese labourers without work permits are also being pushed out and the Libyan leader is now threatening to do the same with the rest of its African workforce.

For some of the Palestinians the push came without warning. Thirty-year-old Ibrahim Rashid Ali, his wife and four children were given 48 hours to leave their house. They had no option, he said, but to sell their belongings for about a fifth of their true value. The Libyan government had declared an area of 600km, including their home in Misrata, as a security zone. All foreigners, not just Palestinians, were forced to leave.

The problem for Ibrahim is that he has nowhere else to go, and no money to get there. His family are from Tulkarem in the West Bank and he says he used to have a Jordanian passport. During his eight years in Libya he lost this crucial document and the Jordanian Embassy has refused him another. "When I heard about the people here, I decided to come here," he explained.

Walking around the camp, *laissez passer* travel documents issued by the Palestinian National Authority and Israeli authorities, Egyptian travel documents and even the deeds to a house in Gaza are pressed into the hand to convince the outside world that they, the Palestinians of the Camp of Return, have a right to make the journey across Egypt to the border with Israel and the self-rule areas at Rafah. Egyptian security officials are concerned, however, at the possibility of another camp springing up at their border post at Rafah if Israel refuses to accept them.

Jamal Eisa, a doctor for 25 years in Libya, admits that there is little chance of Israel allowing them in, but with a Libyan exit visa preventing him from going back to Libya, all he is left with is the hope of returning to Palestine. "It is our dream. We don't have another."

Pharos rising

The ancient island of Pharos is giving forth its treasures, despite bureaucratic ineptitude. **Hala Halim**, in Alexandria witnesses the spectacular event

Amid a few ripples of controversy, the French-Egyptian excavation of archaeological elements submerged in the waters off Alexandria's Qait Bey Fort drew to a close last week, with the raising of some 35 objects from the 2.25 hectare site, which is littered with more than 2,000 elements.

The international media furore that accompanied the raising of the first object, a female granite torso, by the team on Wednesday 4 October was predictable. The ruins lie off what was known as Pharos Island in antiquity (the site of the ancient lighthouse of Alexandria and surrounding monuments). The long-awaited announcement by Jean-Yves Empereur, head of the excavation, that some of the findings are thought to have come from the lighthouse was considered more than newsworthy.

But there was a lull in work to raise more objects after 4 October, and not only due to the sea's recalcitrance. When weather conditions allowed work to resume, it proceeded at a snail's pace due to the tardiness, mismanagement and rapaciousness with which the public sector EGYCO company administered the use of its floating crane. With deadlines to meet, the team would assemble at the appointed hour of 6am, and await the crane, which usually did not appear before noon.

While such proceedings nearly drove the archaeologists to abandon the whole plan, the situation was resolved through the intervention of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) on behalf of the mission.

The SCA is to come into contact with EGYCO in the near future in the process of dismantling a breakwater of concrete blocks that lie atop a number of archaeological objects. It was the SCA which a few years ago commissioned the dumping of the blocks, for the protection of the 15th century Qait Bey Fort, in what had been identified as a submerged site by the antiquities authorities since the early sixties, when a Hellenistic colossal female statue was raised.

The outcry against the breakwater led the SCA to approach Empereur to conduct his survey. With the results of the excavation publicised and some spectacular vestiges brought ashore, the decision has been made by the SCA to seek the help of experts in devising other means of safeguarding the fort.

A symposium organised by the SCA with the aim of finding an environmentally sound design and location for a new breakwater will be held some time in the coming weeks, according to Abdel-Halim Noureddin, secretary-general of the SCA. It will be attended by archaeologists, oceanographers, specialists in breakwaters, architects and civil engineers.

The removal of the concrete blocks will allow the team to study the archaeological elements buried beneath the breakwater, thus developing the hypotheses that emerged from the previous survey.

One object which would become visible when the breakwater was dismantled, Empereur said, was the head of a colossal male statue, the body of which was recently raised, (*see photo*). The headless statue is speculated to represent one of the Ptolemies, sculpted according to Pharaonic stylistic conventions.

The head buried under the breakwater is well-preserved, according to Empereur, and a study of the features would help determine which Ptolemy it represents. Should it be identified as one of the early Ptolemies, it would endorse the archaeologists' contention that a number of gigantic granite blocks on the site (some of which are under the breakwater) came from the lighthouse, given that the monument was planned by Ptolemy I (Soter) and completed in the reign of Ptolemy II (Philadelphus).

"The lighthouse may not have been in white marble, as Strabo claims, but was probably built with a combination of stones", commented Egyptologist Jean-Pierre Corteggiani. Some of the huge granite blocks seem to have been used horizontally. While some blocks probably formed part of a large parapet; others may have formed part of the frame of a huge door or window, he added.

Should the survey be continued, the aid of geophysicists will be sought. Their input would help determine the geological changes that occured on the site and offer more concrete evidence of the impact of cataclysms on Pharos Island, verifying that some of the vestiges do indeed come from the lighthouse, destroyed by successive earthquakes.

The objects brought to shore can be said to be a microcosm of the various hypotheses advanced. In addition to elements like the granite blocks and colossal statues that would have come from the Pharos monuments, the half dozen sphinxes inscribed to Ramses II and other pharaohs highlight the hypothesis that the Ptolemies re-used Pharaonic statuary, as well as masonry, in the construction and adornment of their own monuments.

The elements raised, including two papyriform columns (*see photo*), a bas relief of the god Ptah and a fragment of a Greek inscription, are to be treated in the Kom Al-Dikka laboratories, while a decision is reached about their final destination. As for the granite blocks said to be from the lighthouse, these will be displayed on the grounds of the fort — a testament to its mythic precursor.





photos: Hussein Fathi

Papyriform column, weighing five tonnes, raised on 16 October (above), and (below) segment of colossal statue speculated to be a Ptolemy, weighing 11.2 tonnes, raised on 11 October; note the floating crane in the background

NAM at the crossroads

FOREIGN Minister Amr Moussa said yesterday that the non-aligned nations should play a leading role in reforming the structure of international relations and charting the world's future course, reports **Atef El-Ghamri** from the Colombian capital.

Addressing a summit of the Non-Aligned Movement which opened in Cartagena, Colombia, Moussa said non-alignment faced a "historical crossroads fraught with challenges to the movement's ability to keep abreast of international changes."

With the 113-nation movement seeking a new global role in the post-cold war era, Moussa stressed that "reforming the structure of international relations should not be achieved in the absence of non-aligned nations.

"To the contrary, these nations should participate in leading the process of reform and in charting the present and future course of the world."

Noting that the summit coincided with the 50th anniversary of the United Nations, Moussa said reforming the structure of international relations and of the world organisation itself, were inter-linked. "We should stress here that reforming the United Nations should take into account the ideology of the Non-Aligned Movement and the developing world... Otherwise, the international character of the organisation will be undermined and a further imbalance in international relations will be introduced."

As the world stands on the threshold of the 21st century, Moussa added, "it is indispensable that we inter-react courageously with international changes. We should not be afraid of renovating or developing our performance, as long as we remain committed to our principles... for the Non-Aligned Movement is capable of dealing with major challenges.

"In fact, the Non-Aligned Movement should project itself as the leader of the cavalcade of the world community in this historic phase of changing international relations."

To reactivate the movement, Moussa suggested the "intensification of the dialogue" between its members on political, economic and social issues "with the aim of crystallising a common position". A special conference of leading non-aligned states could be held for this purpose, he said.

Moussa also suggested greater coordination between the non-aligned nations and the "group of 77".

Nearly 50 heads of state converged on Cartagena to reshape the movement, which held its first summit in 1961 to challenge the domination of the rival superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union.

Presidents Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Le Duc Anh of Vietnam were among the first to arrive. Cuba's Fidel Castro and Yasser Arafat, head of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, were also expected.

In line with the movement's search for a mission, Colombian Foreign Minister Rodrigo Pardo said summit leaders will try to maintain a "movement that makes not declarations, but policy".

A key issue is the reform of the UN Security Council, whose five permanent members wield veto power over other member states of the United Nations.

"The United Nations has shown itself as an organisation not up to the challenge of the new world," said Muhamed Sacirbey, foreign minister of Bosnia and a critic of the UN peacekeeping mission in former Yugoslavia. "It still operates on the basis of the old East-West confrontation."

Many developing nations want a voice on the Security Council, although there is no guarantee that non-aligned countries, which represent half the world's population, could find consensus.

UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali, also attending the summit, noted that the Non-Aligned Movement's sheer number of members makes it the biggest potential force in the United Nations. *(see p.7)*

Money talks

In the showdown to November's parliamentary elections, money will vie against political influence, as Gamal Essam El-Din finds out

Money and political influence have traditionally been tools which candidates use to garner winning votes in parliamentary elections. But, with the forthcoming ballot now officially set for 29 November, the phenomenon is assuming greater proportions. And the protagonists are mainly National Democratic Party (NDP) candidates or NDP members running as independents.

According to Shawki El-Sayed, a prominent lawyer who contested the 1990 elections but lost, "democracy, whose salient feature is parliamentary elections, depends on the free will of voters and the ideological credibility of candidates. There are other factors, such as the good reputation of candidates and their dedication to serving the people's interest, that should be taken into consideration by voters . This is why the wide-scale use of political influence and money may not only blunt the free will of voters but also erode the chances of success for candidates who may be more credible and dedicated to national action, but lack money and political clout."

In the Qalyubia constituency of Toukh, a confrontation is shaping up between the NDP candidate, Adel Sidki, and Atiya El-Fayoumi, an NDP member running as an independent. El-Fayoumi had succeeded in four previous elections but lost his seat to Sidki, a legal counsellor, in the last elections held in 1990. A millionaire, El-Fayoumi is allegedly counting on money and a broad network of lucrative businesses to regain his seat. He is also backed by a politically influential son, Mohamed, who heads the NDP's office in Toukh, as well as Qalyubia's local council.

But El-Fayoumi's money and his son's political influence may not be enough. Sidki wields even greater political clout. While not as well off as El-Fayoumi, Sidki's sway stems not only from his official NDP membership and his sibling ties to Prime Minister Atef Sidki, but also from the major role he played in winning the exiting Assembly's approval for a number of important government-proposed laws. Sidki used his legal expertise to sway the Assembly.

To counter, El-Fayoumi held several public rallies, urging voters to back him against "outsiders". He also plastered the streets with banners and posters bearing his name and picture. So far, Sidki has held no rallies, but has put up banners extolling his outstanding performance in parliament.

An even sharper confrontation is emerging in the Menufiya constituency of Al-Bagour between Kamal El-Shazli, the NDP's assistant secretary-general, and Mohamed Kamel, a millionaire businessman running as a Wafdist. With El-Shazli counting on his political sway and Kamel on his money, the two are described as formidable rivals determined to politically destroy each other — no matter the cost.

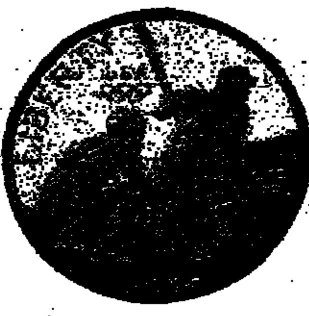
Kamel contested last May's *Shura* Council elections in Al-Bagour, but failed, although he reportedly spent around LE2 million. A jubilant El-Shazli declared that Al-Bagour taught "outsiders", who squander money to buy votes, a good lesson. However, the battle-to-come could be a make-or-break turning point for El-Shazli, whose political career largely depends on the Al-Bagour parliamentary seat which he has occupied for nearly 30 years.

A more subdued struggle is taking place in the Nile Delta town of Kafr Al-Zayyat between Mohamed Fathi El-Baradi, a wealthy businessman and professor of engineering, and Talaat Abdel-Qawi, the NDP candidate who has the support of Assembly Speaker Ahmed Fathi Sorour and the NDP's secretary-general Youssef Wali. The two had faced off in the 1990 elections, with El-Baradi as the NDP's official candidate. Abdel-Qawi, who ran as an independent but later joined the NDP, defeated El-Baradi. This time, the two men competed for the official NDP nomination, and Abdel-Qawi emerged victorious due to support from his influential colleague Mohamed Abu Gazia, Kafr Al-Zayyat's Shura Council member and chairman of the Union of Exporters of Horticultural Crops. Abu Gazia is said to have strongly recommended Abdel-Qawi to Wali.

To promote his campaign, El-Baradi filled the city with posters announcing his determination to deliver a "crushing blow" to his rival. Abdel-Qawi responded by distributing leaflets claiming that Speaker Sorour told him "he could not imagine a Parliament without Abdel-Qawi."

In Kafr Al-Dawwar, another industrial town in the Nile Delta, two NDP members, Mustafa Abu-Hussein and Mahmoud Dawoud, are fighting for the same seat. Abu-Hussein, who amassed wealth by trading in fertilisers, put up posters in the city's streets bearing his name and picture. One of them reads, "Egypt is in desperate need of a large number of businessmen who in other countries became prime ministers." For his part, Dawoud has won the political support of Kamal El-Shazli and is counting on widespread discontent among local farmers, who hold Abu-Hussein responsible for exploiting a fertilisers' shortage at their expense.. Abu-Hussein, on the other hand, believes that Dawoud's popularity with the city's workers has been eroded by his poor performance in dealing with last December's industrial riots.







Mint condition

PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak, on Monday, met with Philip Diehl, director of the United States Mint, who flew from Washington to Cairo to launch the Olympic Coins Programme in Egypt, reports **Inas Mazhar**. During the meeting, Mubarak formally gave his approval for the programme and the choice of the Arab Bank PLC as the official and sole distributor of the 1996 Atlanta Centennial Olympic Games coins in the Arab world.

Hatem Sadek, regional manager of the Arab Bank, also attended the meeting with the president. Following the meeting, Diehl said Mubarak "is very gracious and obviously cares deeply about Egypt's sports programmes. As an avid squash player, President Mubarak is quite pleased that Egypt is more closely associated with the 1996 Olympics."

On the same day, a reception was held by Sadek to celebrate the official launch of the Olympic Coins programme in Egypt. Speaking at the reception, Sadek said that the bank was "greatly honoured" to be chosen as sole distributors of the Olympic coins in the Arab world. "Through this programme, we will renew our commitment and support for Egypt's Olympic teams, as well as those from other countries in the region," he added.

Sadek went on to affirm that "we will also make use of this unique opportunity to promote the spirit of the Olympics: a principle founded on fairness, cooperation, justice and equal opportunities for all."

Commending Sadek's courage and vision in committing his company to such a worthwhile venture, Diehl said, "It is no mistake that the US Mint targeted the Middle East market. Egypt is a very important partner with the US in seeking solutions to pressing regional issues. Perhaps, in our own small way, we can contribute to the expanding economic ties between our two nations."

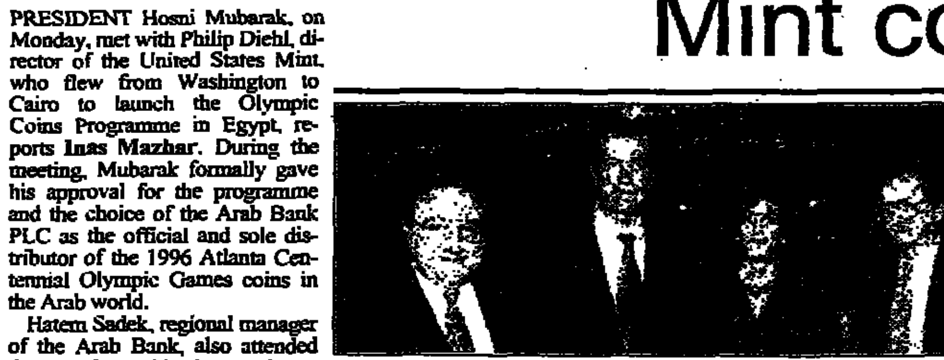
Diehl revealed that the final selection was based on the Arab Bank's outstanding international performance, commitment to community service and an unwavering belief in their marketing abilities.

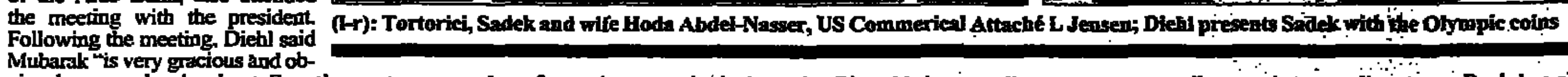
The bank will market the coins in Bahrain, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Morocco, Qatar, Oman, Yemen and the United Arab Emirates and surcharges from the sales proceeds will go towards helping the 1996 Atlanta Games, the International Olympic Committee and Egyptian athletes. The design for the coin was selected through an open competition in which 26 artists submitted 200 different designs. The gold coins feature the Olympic symbols, to mark the centennial of the Games, while the silver coins depict individual sports. The coins were struck in proof quality-matte relief on a mirror finish background.

The reception was attended by a host of businessmen and American diplomats in Cairo, as well as prominent journalists. Among the distinguished guests attending the reception was Anthony J Tortorici, the representative for the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Committee. Tortorici said, "The Arab Bank has rightly associated itself with the largest peace time event in the history of the world."

He added that "under the leadership of His Excellency President Hosni Mubarak, Egypt has become an integral part of the new peace process which will bring about added prosperity."

Earlier this week, Edmund Hull, deputy chief of mission of US Embassy representing Edward Walker, US Ambassador to Egypt, and Diehl hosted a dinner in honour of Sadek and his wife, Hoda Abdel-Nasser.





(l-r): Tortorici, Sadek and wife Hoda Abdel-Nasser, US Commerical Attaché L Jensen; Diehl presents Sadek with the Olympic coins

Brothers still in the running

As the government put more members of the Muslim Brotherhood on military trial, the outlawed group announced the names of its candidates in the forthcoming parliamentary elections. Amr Rabie reviews the Brothers' electoral map

The outlawed Muslim Brotherhood announced this week that 149 of its members will contest the parliamentary elections in 107, or 48 per cent, of the nation's 222 constituencies. This makes the Brotherhood the second largest opposition group, after the Wafd Party, to participate in the elections. Only the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) is contesting the elections in all constituencies. The Wafd is expected to field candidates in over 50 per cent, and possibly up to 80 per cent, of constituencies.

Two Brotherhood candidates are running against cabinet ministers: Maamoun El-Hodeibi, the Brotherhood's spokesman, against Amal Osman, minister of social affairs, in the constituency of Dokki, and Gamal Hassan against Youssef Wali, deputy prime minister and minister of agriculture, in the Fayoum constituency of Ebshwai. The Brotherhood's Mounir Ghaleb, who is running in the Cairo constituency of Al-Ma'had El-Fanni, may find himself poised against Youssef Boutros Ghali, minister of state for international cooperation, if the latter is nominated by the NDP.

The Brotherhood boycotted the 1990 elections, but their candidates include 14 members of the People's Assembly elected in 1987. They are: Ahmed Seif El-Islam Hassan El-Banna, Moukhtar Nouh, Mahdi Akef, Bassiouni Ibrahim, Abdel-Razek Osman, Abdel-Rehim Rasd, Mahfouz Hilmi, Abul-Fotouh Afifi, Bashir Osman, Ali El-Dib, Maamoun El-Hodeibi, Mustafa El-Wardani, Yassin Abdel-Aleem and Abdel-Aziz Ashri.

Other members of the 1987 Assembly — who have been put on military trial — have not been nominated, in an apparent bid to avoid further friction with the government. They are Hassan El-Gamal, Issam El-Iryan, Mahmoud Ali Abdel-Hakim, Ibrahim El-Zaafarni and Mohamed El-Sayed Habib. However, experts believe that there is still a possibility that they can nominate themselves, although this depends on the tug-of-war between the Brotherhood and the government.

In line with the Brotherhood's conservative ideology, its list of candidates does not include a single woman.

There are indications that the "tripartite alliance" between the Brotherhood and the Labour and Liberal parties, which was forged in 1987, has been quietly disbanded. This development, analysts believe, reflects the Brotherhood's wish to run independently of other parties in view of the abolition of the slate system. That system had forced the Brotherhood to run on the slate of the Wafd Party in 1984 and on the Labour-Liberal slate in 1987. But this is no longer necessary following the switch to an individual candidacy system.

The disbanding of the alliance may also indicate Labour's wish to ward off the accusation that it has lost its independent identity since the coalition with the Brotherhood was formed. And yet Brotherhood candidates are not opposing Labour in the key constituencies of Sherbin, where Ibrahim Shukri is running, Nasr City, where Adel Hussein is a candidate, and Imbaba, where Abdel-Hamid Barakat is running.

The announcement of the names of the Brotherhood's candidates coincided with a government decision to put 30 Brotherhood members on trial before a military court on charges of belonging to an illegal group and acting to incite public opinion. The decision brought the number of Brotherhood members facing military trial to seventy-nine.

How 'blessed' were the victors?

A list of twenty-four names, allegedly backed by Pope Shenoudah III, won the elections to a Coptic Community Council. But as Omayma Abdel-Latif reports, church officials deny the list had papal support

About 3,500 Copts went to the polls last Friday to choose 24 out of 55 candidates for membership of a new Community Council, known as *Al-Maglis Al-Melli*. Despite denials by church officials, led by Pope Shenoudah III himself, some voters claimed they had been given a "blessed" list of 24 names and asked to vote for it.

"Some clergymen handed out a list, claiming it included the names of candidates the Pope wanted elected," said one voter, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

But this was denied by Angele Samaan, a professor of English, and Counsellor Nasri Wahba, who have both been elected to the new council. On the eve of the elections, Pope Shenoudah published advertisements in the newspapers, denying that he backed any particular candidates and insisting that "all Copts are my sons".

Samaan said that "more than five lists" were distributed at five polling stations "but not one of them was linked to the Pope. As in any elections, some people get together and compile a list of names, but the Pope undoubtedly had nothing to do with it."

Samaan also denied reports that some angered voters had walked out, without casting their ballots. "I visited all five polling stations and witnessed no signs of protest or anger," she said. "It was a peaceful atmosphere."

Counsellor Wahba said that about 200 voters had walked out, "but for reasons that had nothing to do with the alleged blessed list."

Reports circulated that Talaat Gadallah, head of the church information centre, who ran for election but was not included on the "blessed" list, had resigned in protest. But these reports were denied by Gadallah himself. However he told *Al-Ahram Weekly*, that "the list cast doubt on the credibility of the church because we had been saying all along that the Pope did not support any particular candidate."

The election has brought an assortment of university professors, counsellors, businessmen, members of the *Shura* Council and two clergymen to the council.

Asked why the clergymen were included although the council is a secular body, Samaan said their presence was needed to discuss church affairs, an area on which they were knowledgeable.

Still a man's parliament

With only around 25 women so far set to vie for some of parliament's 444 seats in the forthcoming elections, the under-representation of women is set to continue. Dina Ezzat reports

Most political parties are endorsing mere handfuls of women candidates in the 29 November parliamentary elections. The ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) says it will field at least 15 women, the Wafd Party is pledging support for around five, the Islamist-oriented Labour Party is nominating three, and the leftist Tagammu, one. Another woman is standing on behalf of the Women's Union. The Nasserist Democratic Party, citing a lack of qualified women, is not including any on its list of candidates.

Heads of the women's secretariats of the various political parties are quick to stress the importance of women's participation, as candidates as well as voters. "We asked women, in all governorates, who thought they would make good candidates to come forward," said Farkhunda Hassan, chairwoman of the NDP's women's secretariat.

For women candidates, even those with the NDP's backing, the battle will be tough. Analysts believe that no more than 15 women will make it to the People's Assembly, which means that female representation will not be much higher than the meagre 2.2 per cent in the outgoing parliament.

Prevailing social attitudes do little to enhance chances of success. "In the minds of many men and women, parliament remains a patriarchal establishment," said researcher Inas Taha. Women candidates seeking to overcome the gender barrier have to be extremely capable.

Soraya Labna, standing for the NDP in Nasr City, is such a candidate. According to a local male voter, Labna is a tough woman who enjoys the full support of her party. "She is no beginner," he said. "She serves her constituency well. She is positively a winning card for the party."

But even the most confident of women candidates express concern about the formidable opponents they are running against. Mona Qorashi, a Wafd Party candidate in the constituency of Qasr Al-Nil, will face some seasoned NDP politicians and affluent independents. Fatehiya El-Assal, the Tagammu's candidate in Imbaba, also faces similarly overwhelming odds. And according to an informed NDP source, the ruling party is still pondering the wisdom of having Amal Osman, social affairs minister, run in the Dokki district opposite Maamoun El-Hodeibi, spokesman of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood.

Some women candidates are coming up with impressive programmes to encourage both men and women to give them their votes. Naglaa El-Qalyubi, the Labour Party's candidate in the constituency of Al-Ma'had Al-Fanni, says "the programme of the Labour Party, which is the cornerstone of my programme, offers a better alternative to the current conditions, which many people are unhappy with. So, regardless of my gender or the power of my opponents, I think that I have a fairly good chance."

While most women candidates feel compelled to address certain women's issues, such as amending the nationality law that denies Egyptian women the right to pass on their nationality to their children by foreign husbands, they steer clear of confining themselves to an exclusively feminist agenda. "If I only speak about women's rights, I run the very serious risk of losing all the men's votes," El-Assal explained.

In the next few days, candidates will start canvassing — touring their constituencies and talking to voters. Large public gatherings are banned, so candidates will mingle with men in coffee shops or knock on doors to explain their vision of the future to both men and women.

Women's failure to participate in politics extends beyond the lack of women candidates. For the past year, the National Council for Motherhood and Childhood, chaired by Mrs Suzanne Mubarak, has been urging women to participate more actively in politics, and particularly to register as voters.

However, since Egyptian women won the right to vote in 1956, the turnout of women voters has been very low in comparison with other countries, and has never exceeded 27.9 per cent.

Even the women who will be queueing outside the ballot boxes on 29 November will not necessarily be voting for the candidate of their choice. Their position, experts believe, is often manipulated by male relatives who have little interest in electing women or those who support women's rights.

Another reason cited for the failure of women to secure women's votes is that some women candidates fail to address issues of prime importance to ordinary women.

The highest level of women's representation in parliament was 6.6 per cent in 1986. This was made possible by a law that reserved 32 seats for women. Since this law was quashed by the Supreme Constitutional Court, the percentage has significantly declined.

Al-Shaab editor faces Law 93

The chief editor of an opposition Islamist-oriented newspaper is the first journalist to fall foul of the new law on publication offences. Nevine Khalil reports

Magdi Hussein, chief editor of *Al-Shaab*, mouthpiece of the Islamist-oriented Labour Party, was questioned by prosecution officials for publishing material which Alaa El-Alfi, son of Interior Minister Hassan El-Alfi, claimed was libelous. The officials later decided to put Hussein on trial before a criminal court. El-Alfi's was the first complaint filed against a journalist on the basis of Law 93 for 1995, which provides harsh penalties for the publication of false or malicious news.

The Press Syndicate had denounced the new law and demanded that it be repealed, vowing to take immediate action if it was invoked against any of its members. But despite the fact that the complaint had already been filed, Magdi Hussein was not a topic of discussion at an extraordinary General Assembly earlier this month.

Hussein, however, does not feel that the Syndicate has turned its back on him. "The fact is that the Syndicate's council was not informed immediately either by me or the general prosecutor's office," Hussein told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. "So I [later] sent a comprehensive memo to the council informing it of the situation."

Council member Magdi Mehanna said the Syndicate's council will probably meet next week to discuss the case. Mehanna also said that Syndicate Chairman Ibrahim Nafie had asked his deputy, Galal Eissa, to send a letter to the general prosecutor, inquiring whether Hussein had been charged officially.

Hussein and council member Mohamed Abdel-Qoddous believe the whole matter should be postponed until after the parliamentary elections are held on 29 November. "Journalists, like other people, are busy with the elections," Abdel-Qoddous said. About half a dozen journalists, including Abdel-Qoddous, are running in the elections.

According to Hussein, the story published in his newspaper reported that the unnamed son of an unnamed minister refused to pay the bill after a meal at a five-star hotel. In an ensuing quarrel, the son's companions beat up the hotel manager.

During interrogation, Hussein refused to disclose the name of the reporter who provided the story and, consequently, took full responsibility for it as the newspaper's editor-in-chief.

After filing the complaint, Alaa El-Alfi presented proof that the bill had been paid.

Asked whether he had material evidence to corroborate the story, Hussein said that there was none apart from eye-witness accounts. "But I don't believe that we will reach that point," he said.

Hussein said his lawyers will argue that El-Alfi had no right to complain because he was not mentioned by name in the article.

What surprised Hussein was the speed at which the prosecutor's office acted. "Usually, in such cases the report is shelved because there is no evidence of libel," he said.

No date has been set yet for the court hearings.



Under the liberal banner

In the second instalment of *Al-Ahram Weekly*'s series on political parties contesting the parliamentary elections, officially set for 29 November, **Shaden Shehab** reviews the history and platform of the Wafd Party, interviews its secretary-general and profiles some of its prominent figures

The Wafd Party, a staunch advocate of political and economic liberalism, occupied the centre stage of domestic politics between two revolutions that shaped Egypt's modern history — the 1919 Revolution against the British and the 1952 Revolution that overthrew the monarchy. Suppressed — along with other opposition parties — for a quarter of a century by post-revolutionary governments, the Wafd staged a comeback in 1978 when the nation reverted to the multi-party system. Fouad Serageddin, Wafd secretary general at the time of the party's dissolution in 1952, assumed the leadership of the refounded party.

Since its establishment by Saad Zaghloul in 1919 to lead the struggle for Egypt's liberation from British domination, the Wafd struggled to curtail the power of the monarchy, advocated democracy and free enterprise and laid an emphasis on Muslim-Christian unity. But, ironically, it was laid open to allegations of collaboration with Britain when a Wafdist government was imposed on the king by the occupation forces in 1942. Moreover, by including a diversity of social classes with conflicting interests within its ranks, the party was prone to internal splits, with Makram Ebeid leading a major defection shortly after the 1942 government was established.



Zaghloul El-Nahhas

Before the 1952 Revolution, the Wafd swept to one massive parliamentary election victory after another. But since its comeback, its representation in parliament has been limited: it won 56 seats in the 1984 elections and 35 in 1987. The major criticism currently levelled against the Wafd is that it has failed to adapt itself to modern political life, mainly as a result of its opposition to the 1952 Revolution. This charge is rejected by party officials.

The Wafd, meaning delegation, was named after the Egyptian delegation, led by Zaghloul, that travelled to Paris to plead Egypt's case for independence before the Versailles conference that shaped a new world order at the end of World War I. The Wafd gained legitimacy because Zaghloul managed to collect tens of thousands of signatures on petitions from all over Egypt, declaring to the British that he was the representative of the Egyptian people.

Although Zaghloul's mission in Paris ended in failure, it nevertheless aroused national awareness and anti-British sentiment. Britain reacted by sending Zaghloul and some of his colleagues into exile in Malta. This action triggered the 1919 Revolution. Three years later Britain, in collaboration with the royal palace, issued a unilateral declaration of Egypt's independence, which was followed by the promulgation of the 1923 Constitution.

Although this constitution provided for a parliamentary system of government, it empowered the king to appoint the prime minister, dismiss the cabinet and postpone elections. In the first elections after the declaration, the Wafd was swept to power, gaining 195 seats out of 214. But Zaghloul's government survived for only 11 months, until November 1924. It resigned after Zaghloul rejected a British ultimatum demanding the Egyptian army's withdrawal from Sudan following the assassination of Sudan's British governor, Sir Lee Stack Pasha.

New elections were held in March 1925 and the Wafd again won a sweeping majority. But the Wafdist government resigned the following year and was replaced by a coalition between the Wafd and the Liberal Constitutionalists because Zaghloul did not wish to be dragged into another confrontation with the British. Adli Yakan, a Liberal Constitutionalist, formed the coalition government while Zaghloul was elected speaker of the House of Representatives. In April 1927, Yakan resigned and was replaced by Abdel-Khalek Sarwat.

Zaghloul died the same year, and the Wafd elected Mustafa El-Nahhas as his successor. Britain reacted by suspending talks with the Egyptian government, forcing Sarwat to resign.

A second coalition was formed between the Wafd and the Liberal Constitutionalists, with El-Nahhas heading the government. But it was dismissed by King Fouad after barely three months in office. A new government was formed in June 1928 from which the Wafd was excluded. But the Wafd won a sweeping majority again in the December 1929 elections, gaining 212 seats, with other parties and independents winning 23. El-Nahhas formed the government but resigned six months later because the palace opposed a Wafd-proposed law on the impeachment of cabinet ministers.

Ismail Sidki formed a pro-palace government which replaced the 1923 Constitution with the 1930 Constitution, giving the king even greater powers. As a result, the Wafd, as well as the Liberal Constitutionalists, boycotted elections held in 1931.

Sidki remained in office until the 1936 elections, when the Wafd again won a majority. El-Nahhas formed a new government which signed the 1936 Alliance and Friendship Treaty with Britain. The Wafd viewed the treaty as a step towards complete independence because it restricted the British military presence to the Suez Canal zone and the main cities.

El-Nahhas resigned in July 1937 following King Fouad's death and Farouk's accession to the throne. He was asked to form a new government, but it lasted for only five months before being dismissed as a result of a dispute within the Wafd over generating electricity from the Aswan reservoir. The split, which caused the expulsion of some Wafdists, highlighted the gap between lower middle class and "aristocratic" party members.

In the 1938 elections, the Wafd failed to win a majority and successive shortlived governments were formed by non-Wafdist Mohamed Mahmoud, Ali Maher — who antagonised the British by refusing to declare war on the Axis powers — Hassan Sabri and Hussein Serry. With the Axis forces advancing in the Western Desert, Britain decided that Egypt required a stable government and that this could be achieved only if the Wafd was restored to power. A British ultimatum was served to King Farouk threatening to dethrone him unless he complied. Tanks were dispatched to surround Abdin Palace to ensure his acquiescence. As a result, El-Nahhas formed a new government on 4 February 1942. This was Britain's most flagrant intervention in Egyptian politics, and it exposed El-Nahhas to accusations of collaboration.

The new government dismissed several administrative officials, replacing them with Wafdists. Makram Ebeid, then finance minister, objected to this and attacked Wafd policies. As a result El-Nahhas resigned, only to form another cabinet, and Ebeid was expelled from the party. Ebeid later established his own party, *Al-Kutla Al-Wafdiya* (Wafdist bloc) and published his famous "black book" accusing El-Nahhas of corruption.

With the end of World War II, British support for the Wafd also ended and the El-Nahhas government was dismissed. After the Wafd's exclusion from power for five years, El-Nahhas formed his last government in 1950 and, ironically, in 1951, abrogated the very treaty he had concluded with Britain. It was a period of massive unrest, including an uprising against the British in Ismailia and widespread arson in Cairo on 26 January, 1952. The government was dismissed and martial law was imposed.

After the nation switched to a multi-party system under President Anwar El-Sadat, a law governing the formation of new parties was passed in 1977. The Wafd staged a comeback. With three parties already in existence — Mamdouh Salem's Misr Arab Socialist party, the Tagammu, led by Khaled Mohieddin and Mustafa Kamel Murad's Socialist Liberals — the Wafd obtained a licence from the special Committee on Political Parties in February 1978. But this was possible only because the Wafd altered its pre-revolution platform to conform with the new law.

Sadat seemed to have second thoughts a few months later, issuing a decree prohibiting those who had held high positions before the revolution from political party membership. The decree appeared to be directed personally against Wafd leader Fouad Serageddin and Secretary-General Ibrahim Farag. In reaction, the Wafd decided to "freeze" its activities. Serageddin and many other prominent political figures from the opposition were jailed by Sadat one month before his assassination in October 1981.

Two years later, the Wafd decided to resurrect itself, but this time faced opposition from the Committee on Political Parties, which argued that in view of the "freeze" decision, the party must apply for a new licence. The Wafd went to the administrative court which ruled in its favour in October 1983, making it possible for it to contest elections the following year.

In the 1984 elections, which were won by the ruling National Democratic Party, the Wafd, in tacit alliance with the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, was the only opposition party that managed to gain representation, winning 57 seats — a 12.72 per cent share. In the 1987 elections, the Wafd lost its status as the leading opposition force in the People's Assembly, winning 35 seats compared to 60 captured by the Labour-Muslim Brotherhood alliance. The Wafd along with other opposition parties, with the exception of Tagammu, boycotted the 1990 elections.

"We will contest the coming elections because Egypt is passing through a very critical stage and the boat is about to sink," said Ibrahim Dessouki Abaza, the Wafd's assistant secretary-general. According to Abaza, the party will employ "new propaganda techniques used for the first time in Egypt, but we are not revealing our cards yet." The party decided to use these techniques, he said, "because all we are allowed by the government is 80 minutes of television time. The use of posters and placards is forbidden, as well as other forms of campaigning."

The Wafd's senior members are said to include affluent businessmen and landowners opposed to the principles of the 1952 Revolution. But this was denied by No'man Gomaa, the party's deputy leader. "We respect the 23rd of July [Revolution] because it is part of Egyptian history. Neither are we hostile to the revolution's leaders, but we differ with them on the scope of its achievements."

Platform

Although the party has its roots in pre-1952 Egypt, its officials insist that their platform deals with contemporary issues. With political reform the cornerstone of their programme, Serageddin has repeatedly demanded a new constitution, making the election of the president of the republic by direct ballot instead of a yes-or-no national referendum, and for one term only, and giving parliament greater powers to monitor public expenditure. The party also believes that parliamentary elections should be supervised by a neutral government.

The party champions a market economy, demanding that private enterprise should be encouraged and that restrictions on investments be lifted. But it also demands that monopoly should not be tolerated, unemployment fought and wages linked to prices. The party also urges the amendment of tax legislation to ensure greater justice for taxpayers.

The Wafd calls for the removal of all restrictions on press freedom and the establishment of political parties, greater civil liberties and a strict separation of power.

In foreign policy, the party advocates Arab unity and backs the government's efforts to remove weapons of mass destruction from the Middle East and protect the rights of the Palestinians. The party opposes the Khartoum regime of Gen. Omar Al-Bashir and believes that any threat to the supply of Nile water to Egypt should be met with serious action.

Funding

Party officials claim that the Wafd is the only opposition party that is financially independent. They say funding is provided by membership fees, which may be as high as LE5,000 for senior members, and by donations and profits accrued by the party's newspaper. A more detailed breakdown of financial resources was not available.

Membership

An exact figure for party membership is also unavailable, but officials estimate membership at half a million.

Headquarters

The Wafd Party headquarters is a villa in Dokki, reportedly bought for LE19 million.

Immutable principles

Saad Fakhri Abdel-Nour, a Copt, is secretary-general of the Wafd Party. From a wealthy Wafdist family, he was named after Saad Zagloul, leader of the Wafd and the 1919 Revolution, and is himself a long-standing member of the party. Abdel-Nour, 74, obtained a law degree in 1943 from King Fouad University, now Cairo University, and then travelled to France for post-graduate studies.

After earning two diplomas, in law and economics, he returned to Cairo and started a law practice in 1947. Three years later, he was promoted to membership of the Wafd Association, the party's steering committee. He was imprisoned briefly in 1961-62 and again in 1967 for opposing President Gamal Abdel-Nasser.

When the Wafd staged a come-back in 1978, he was a member of the party's higher committee. He ran in the 1984 elections but did not make it to the People's Assembly. Earlier this year he was chosen by party leader Fouad Serageddin as the Wafd's fifth secretary-general following the death of Ibrahim Farag.

What are the differences between the pre-1952 Wafd Party and the post-1978 Wafd?

The three cornerstones of the Wafd's policy are independence, democracy and the liberation of women. We cannot say that the Wafd of 1995 is different from the Wafd of 1918 because, although we have achieved our first demand, independence, our second and third goals remain unrealised.

We want true democracy for our country; we want the government to be the true representative of the people. The People's Assembly should act as a watchdog for the country's budget and should have the right to withdraw confidence from the cabinet.

As for women's liberation, we are moving backwards, not forwards. Today, women are treated in an inhuman way and urged to stay at home, under the false pretext that this is dictated by Islamic *shari'a*. But this is a misinterpretation of Islam, which treats women respectfully. So the Wafd's principles and objectives remain unchanged.

The name of the Wafd has always been linked to capitalists, landowners and the affluent in general. How accurate is this view?

This is a big lie. The opponents of Saad Zagloul called him the leader of the rabble, so how can the Wafd be the party of the rich? All social classes participated in the 1919 Revolution, and the Wafd also included members from all classes.

The Wafd is known for its continued opposition to the 1952 Revolution, although it was a turning point in Egypt's history that cannot be glossed over. How do you explain this position?

I don't regard what happened in 1952 as a revolution. It was merely an action by some army officers. They wanted to strike a blow at the Wafd because it was the true representative of the people. This is why the supporters of the 23rd of July invented the lie that the Wafd was the party of the rich and that the 23rd of July was a revolution of the masses.

Will the Wafd coordinate strategy with other opposition parties in the coming elections?

There is no coordination between us and any other party because our principles are different from theirs. How can we ally ourelves with the Nasserists who fought us for 35 years? Or with the Labour Party which represents the *salafiya* [reactionary] trend; they want women to be veiled while we call for the emancipation of women. As for the Tagammu, they call for nationalisation and totalitarianism while we stand for democracy and free enterprise.

But in the 1984 elections, the Wafd, although it is known as the House of the Copts, allied itself with the Muslim Brotherhood?

In 1984, the Muslim Brothers were like orphans. They were a small family. They said at the time that they could not contest the elections because they were a religious group; so they needed to ally themselves with a political party.

How many Copts will the Wafd nominate in the coming elections?

There will be no less than 30 Copts.

Is this to target the Coptic vote?

This is not a barter deal. It is a fact that the other parties are closing their doors to Copts. So it is natural for the Copts to feel that the Wafd is their home.

What about women?

We have Mona Qorashi in Qasr Al-Nil, and we will announce the names of the others later. It should be noted that we have six women serving on the party's higher committee.

Rumour has it that the Wafd Party is paid large amounts of money by Saudi Arabia. Is this true?

The Wafd does not need to take money from anybody. We are financially independent and our financial position is quite good. This rumour started because during the Gulf War, the Wafd sympathised with Kuwait. We view Saddam Hussein as another Gamal Abdel-Nasser. Like Nasser, Saddam wanted to control and manipulate the Arab world. Saudi Arabia had to defend itself against Iraq and we supported it in this.

Wafd secretary-general on the eve of the July '52, Fouad Serageddin lived to lead the party's revival. Noaman Goma'a is his likely successor

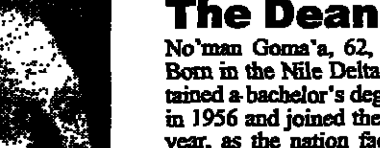
The Pasha

Fouad Serageddin, 85, is the Wafd's chairman and undisputed boss. With a cigar pereniallly dangling from his mouth, he insists on being addressed as "Fouad Pasha" to demonstrate his rejection of the 1952 Revolution which abolished the aristocratic titles of bey and pasha. Within Wafd party ranks, he is often referred to as The Pasha.

Born to a wealthy family of landowners in the province of Daqahliya, Serageddin obtained a law degree from King Fouad University, now Cairo University, in 1931 and began a brief career as a district prosecutor the following year before devoting himself to running his family business. He joined the Wafd Party in 1936 and was elected uncontested to the House of Representatives in the same year, retaining his seat until 1942.

In that year, he made it to the cabinet for the first time, serving as minister of agriculture and later holding the portfolios of the interior, social affairs and communications. He became a member of the Senate in 1946 and secretary-general of the Wafd Party in 1948 at the age of 38.

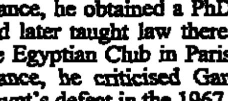
He was minister of the interior, doubling as finance minister, in the period between 1950 and 1952, when the nation was in turmoil. He still takes credit for ordering a police garrison in Ismailia, armed only with rifles, to engage in a suicidal battle with British occupation forces using field guns. He and the Wafdist cabinet of which he was a member were dismissed following the widespread arson in Cairo on 26 January 1952.



When the "Free Officers" took over in the July '52 Revolution, Serageddin was put on trial and sentenced to 15 years imprisonment, but he was released after two months. He was detained again in 1953, 1956, 1961, 1965 and 1967 for opposing the regime of President Gamal Abdel-Nasser. He was also detained by President Anwar El-Sadat, along with other political figures, in 1981.

When he led the Wafd Party's comeback in 1978, Sadat compared him to Louis XVI coming back from the grave. Despite his corpulent body and advanced age, Serageddin is described by associates as fairly energetic.

The Dean



No'man Goma'a, 62, is the Wafd's deputy chairman. Born in the Nile Delta town of Shebin Al-Kom, he obtained a bachelor's degree in law from Cairo University in 1956 and joined the army as a volunteer in the same year, as the nation faced the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion. Captured by French forces, he later managed to escape. He served as an assistant district attorney until 1961, obtaining two law diplomas from Cairo University during the same period.

Winning a scholarship for advanced studies in France, he obtained a PhD from the Sorbonne in 1966 and later taught law there. He was made chairman of the Egyptian Club in Paris in 1966. During his stay in France, he criticised Gamal Abdel-Nasser's regime, particularly following Egypt's defeat in the 1967 War. Upon his return to Egypt in 1970, he joined the staff of Cairo University's Faculty of Law and also began a law practice. In 1980, he became the head of the faculty's Civil Law Department and was promoted to faculty dean in 1988.

His membership of the Wafd dates back to his school days, and when the Wafd reappeared in 1978, he rejoined it, becoming a member of its higher committee. He became assistant secretary-general in 1986 and deputy chairman in 1989.

Goma'a, who contributes a regular column to the *Wafd* newspaper, is planning to run for election in the Imbaba constituency.

Independent analysts, interviewed by the *Weekly*, say the Wafd has to let go of old scores, if it is to realise its potential as the party of liberalism

Honourable past

The Wafd has its strengths and weaknesses. A point in its favour is that it did not emerge from the government's womb like several other parties; it had its own identity from the very beginning. Another point in its favour is its honourable past, with great achievements, which gave the Wafd its legitimacy. Also, the Wafd champions lofty principles such as liberalism and democracy, and this is a worldwide trend today.

As for the negative points, Fouad Serageddin is too old to be chairman; he should leave his post to the younger generation. Also, although the party champions democracy, it does not practise it within its own ranks. But then this is true of all political parties.

The Wafd is living in the past; it even celebrates occasions which the younger generation cannot relate to. It continuously refers to the past, failing to offer solutions to present-day problems.

Another negative point is its hostility to the 1952 Revolution. It is opposed to a very crucial period that left its stamp on Egypt's history. And when the party declares opposition to the revolution, it only confuses the younger generation.

Kamal El-Menoufi
Political science professor, Cairo University

Nostalgic living

By championing democracy and political and economic liberalism, the Wafd Party is attempting to present itself on the domestic political scene as a liberal party. The problem, however, is that the Wafd belongs to the past. They remain opposed to the 1952 Revolution although they do not seem to know what it was all about. The revolution, by introducing basic political, economic and social reforms, was living proof that the pre-1952 parties were failures. The Wafd is fighting change and attempting to survive on its erstwhile popularity.

Already in the 1940s the Wafd Party had fallen victim to internal splits, becoming a party for the feudalists and the rich, instead of a party for the masses. Consequently, the middle and working classes found no place for themselves in the party and turned to other ideologies.

Then from 1952 until 1978, nobody heard about the Wafd, which proves that it is not a party capable of fighting for itself. It made no attempt to stay alive or to struggle against the Nasser regime, which is what the communists and the Muslim Brotherhood did. The Wafd reappeared only when the political environment was congenial in 1978. But it quickly froze its activities, again showing an unwillingness to fight.

When the Wafd finally came back, its popularity had faded, partly because of the restrictions clamped on political parties and the Wafd's unwillingness to fight back. Also, by aligning itself with the Muslim Brotherhood in 1984, the Wafd showed itself as a party without principles.

We may describe the Wafd as a nostalgic party, choosing to live in the past. It does not understand that the word 'Wafd' does not have the same magic it once had.

Hassan Nafaa
Political science professor, Cairo University

Unadaptive mechanisms

The Wafd is Egypt's oldest political party. It occupied a front seat in Egyptian politics from 1919 to 1952 because it championed two inter-related causes, national liberation and democracy.

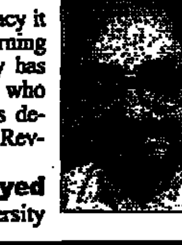
At present, Egypt needs a strong party that advocates liberalism. In our time, mistaken interpretations of Islam are used by some people to block progress and democracy. The presence of a party truly committed to the cause of enlightenment could constitute a bulwark against these forces.

However, the Wafd could not revive its former leading role in Egyptian politics, not only because of the restrictions imposed on political parties, but also because of the party's failure to adapt its platform to new realities in this country.

Both national liberation and democracy are still important and fundamental issues in Egypt today, but they do not have the same meaning which they had during the era of liberation. Today, national liberation does not mean ending military occupation but standing up to international financial institutions which strive to impose on this country an economic policy which does not correspond with its needs and priorities. The new Wafd Party sympathises with many elements of the economic policy recommended by these institutions.

Democracy means not only fair and regular parliamentary elections, but also the exercise of the freedoms of belief, conscience and expression. The Wafd Party did not stand by those who were prosecuted for their exercise of these very freedoms, such as Taha Hussein in the 1920s and Nasr Hamed Abu-Zeid in the 1990s.

Moreover, the party has to show that the democracy it preaches is practised within the party itself by turning out new generations of leaders. Finally, the party has failed to reach out to millions of young Egyptians who are not moved by the party's sanctification of its deceased leaders or its declared hostility to the '52 Revolution.



Mustafa El-Sayed
Political science professor, Cairo University

Front page opposition

As a daily, *Al-Wafd* enjoys a unique status among the country's party press, but according to critics there is little to the newspaper beyond its front page

Al-Wafd newspaper was launched in March 1984 — a parliamentary election year. Initially published on Thursdays as a weekly, it became a daily in 1987, another election year. The paper's goal, according to Editor-in-Chief Gamal Badawi, is "to call for a democratic society in which political and economic freedoms are guaranteed — democracy that is based on a strong constitution that cannot be abused." A goal which, Badawi said, reflects that of the Wafd Party.

In its early days, *Al-Wafd* often adopted a harsh tone in its criticism of the government, with fiery articles by then Editor-in-Chief Mustafa Sherdy — the scion of a Wafdist family, and himself a Wafdist since childhood.

Under Sherdy's leadership, the newspaper won a reputation of sorts for its regular page-two section entitled "*Al-Asfoura*" (the bird). Purporting to include confidential items gleaned by clandestine means, the section usually heaped scorn on some government official or exposed wrong-doings in official circles. It was this section which, it was widely believed, caused the weekly edition's circulation to rocket to 500,000 and the daily's to 300,000 by 1989. Current circulation figures are secret.

After Sherdy's death, Gamal Badawi took over and, to the disappointment of many Wafdist readers, gradually toned down the newspaper's harshly critical language. But Badawi is unrepentent. "Any newspaper is liable to change when it changes its chief editor," Badawi told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. "I am not Mustafa Sherdy."

Sherdy, Badawi said "wrote from the heart, addressing the people's sentiment. His articles were charged with emotion and people liked them. But I address the intellect, making people think as they read.

Rumours that the newspaper has Saudi Arabian financial backing, in the form of grants and a 30,000-copy subscription, were hotly denied by Badawi. These rumours gained ground when the newspaper failed to publish a word on the plight of an Egyptian doctor who was flogged in Saudi Arabia after complaining that his son was raped by a teacher.

But Badawi insisted that "the newspaper's advertisements and circulation cover our expenditure and we are even left with a respectable margin of profit." He described the charge that Saudi Arabia takes 30,000 copies as "ridiculous, because there is no way it could be done discreetly. The newspaper is printed by *Al-Ahram* and its staff would be the first to know."

He also denied that Saudi Arabia contributed financially to the paper. Acceptance of such donations, he said, would be a violation of the political parties' law.

The newspaper has also been criticised recently for its failure to champion the cause of Nasr Hamed Abu Zeid, a professor of Arabic literature ordered by a court to divorce his wife on the grounds that he had renounced Islam. And the newspaper dealt only very briefly with the case of Youssef Chahine's film *The Emigrant*, which was banned for a short time on the grounds that it portrayed the Biblical character of Joseph, whom Muslims revere as a prophet. Badawi declined to explain the newspaper's editorial position on these issues.

However, *Al-Wafd* won praise from Farouk Abu Zeid, dean of Cairo University's Faculty of Mass Communications. In his opinion, "*Al-Wafd* is the only credible opposition newspaper which people can rely on, along with the national newspapers." Another positive point, he said, is that the newspaper "is open to writers from different ideological trends".

Abu Zeid believes the paper has improved, largely thanks to the change in editorship. In its early days, "It was yellow journalism, and relied on sensationalism, as was seen with the *Al-Asfoura* page. But in a short time Gamal Badawi managed to eliminate this page and give the newspaper a more serious image."

However Abu Zeid complained that the newspaper was not rich in content. "Reading the front page is enough. The rest of the newspaper does not offer a wide range of news, and focuses more on criticism."

Edited by **Wadie Kirolos**

Compensations granted, but little cash

Despite a cash shortage caused by Iraq's refusal to comply with UN resolutions, the UNCC has approved more Gulf War compensation claims

An additional 217,500 people from some 67 countries, who were forced to flee Iraq and Kuwait as a result of the Gulf War, were awarded over $770 million in compensation by the governing council of the United Nations Compensations Commission (UNCC) last week.

The new awards bring to 560,000 the number of those granted compensations under the UNCC's Category A classification, which refers claimants who were forced to evacuate the area due to the war. The total value of claims awarded under this category so far has reached $2 billion. By December 1995, the UNCC will have issued compensation awards in favour of about 290,000 Egyptians in Category A worth a total of $785 million.

UNCC budget restraints, however, coupled with Iraq's refusal to agree to the partial lifting of economic sanctions, means that the vast majority of the compensation awards so far have only been on paper. The compensations would have been paid by deducting 30 per cent from the proceeds of Iraqi oil sales proposed by the UN Security Council and rejected by Iraq.

Despite the shortage of funds, the UNCC's governing council is also giving priority to the payment of Category B claims dealing with death and serious personal injuries. The council last week decided to pay the outstanding compensation awards under this category, which, to date, total $8.2 million. The UNCC has already paid Category B claimants $2.7 million. Of these, 307 claimants are Egyptian nationals who will receive more than one million dollars in damages.

Resources for Category B payments come from the application of Security Council resolution 778, which urged countries still holding frozen Iraqi funds, oil and oil products, as well as those owing money to Iraq for oil, to release these assets to the UN.

UN sources told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that during the commission's 18th session, which was held from 9-11 October, the council addressed the issue of locating additional resources for funding. It also discussed requesting information from the UN Sanctions Committee on confiscated Iraqi oil. The oil was taken from ships transporting it illegally in the Persian Gulf.

The UNCC has also agreed to consider over 3100 Category A, B, C, D and E claims submitted by 18 countries and 4 international organisations after the deadlines set by the commission.

The governing board also considered a claim submitted by the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) on behalf of thousands of Egyptians who were working in Iraq when the war broke out and who have since been unable to cash their remittances, estimated at about $500 million, from the branches of Iraqi banks in Egypt.

Egypt claims that these remittances, which were deposited at the Rafidain and Rashid Banks, were seized by the Iraqi government after the invasion. Iraq has maintained that, due to the UN embargo, the transfer of funds is not possible.

In a report to the board of governors meeting last week, the UNCC's Panel of Commissioners said that only claims for remittances dating after 2 July, 1990 — one month before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait — fall within the jurisdiction of the UNCC. The report estimated that it took one month for the remittances to arrive in Egypt, and therefore only the transfers dating after 2 July would have been affected by the 2 August invasion. The UNCC's mandate pertains only to damages directly resulting from the invasion and the ensuing war.

The Panel of Commissioners report, endorsed by the UNCC's governing council, now gives the Egyptian government four months to submit a more detailed remittances' claim to the UNCC. The claim should include the names of the claimants, the amount of the transfer and the date it was deposited in the relevant Iraqi bank, as well as copies of the payment orders.

The UNCC would then relay this information to the Iraqi government, which has four months to respond to the UNCC.

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Countdown to Amman (2)

In anticipation of peace

With Foreign Minister Amr Moussa heading the Egyptian delegation, the road from Cairo to Amman starts from the Foreign Ministry building on the Corniche. In the heat of preparations, delegates will inevitably stop by the office of Ambassador Raouf Saad, assistant foreign minister for regional cooperation, and a leading member of the Egyptian delegation. In his capacity as chairman of the Regional Finance Committee, Ambassador Saad will be a panelist in various sessions of the summit. Speaking with Al-Ahram Weekly *on the government's position on ongoing preparations for the summit, he stresses that these efforts lay the groundwork for cooperation under a broader peace.*

In a series of interviews ahead of the Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit in Amman 29 October - 1 November, Egyptian businessmen and officials talk to *Al-Ahram Weekly* about their expectations and the future of regional economic cooperation

Generally speaking, what are the lessons learnt from Casablanca?

I would be more positive. You seem to imply that mistakes were made in Casablanca. Casablanca was an event which took place for the first time in an Arab country and included most of the Arab countries as well as Israel. So in that sense it had more of a political tinge. Admittedly, it featured a crowd of business delegates, but the significance of this event was mainly political.

Despite the positive atmosphere that prevailed in Casablanca, it became obvious that although peace is within reach, it is not yet at hand. Egypt's position is that fully-fledged regional economic cooperation cannot materialise without comprehensive peace.

The message conveyed to the international business community in Casablanca was that intensive efforts are still needed to reach the kind of peace that would secure the right of Palestinian self-determination, and include Syria and Lebanon. Our efforts to achieve a peace that covers all political, economic and security dimensions should coincide with our efforts to lay a sound basis for economic cooperation in anticipation of such a peace.

This year's conference is more restricted in number and more limited in areas of activities. In a nutshell, it is more business-oriented. Egypt regards Amman, like Casablanca, as an effort within the peace process. Egypt's responsibility, as the one who started peace, is to make sure that the new regional economic arrangements will benefit all parties concerned. This is, by itself, part and parcel of peace.

You say that full-fledged economic cooperation cannot be achieved except after peace is established. On the practical level, how can that be achieved when borders are open, businessmen are signing contracts, and goods are going back and forth? How can you restrict these activities?

We are not trying to restrict them. You claim that borders are open, this is not true. You claim that contracts are being exchanged, this is not true either. All these activities are themselves rather limited.

However, we are not just considering economic cooperation on the basis of a contract or a joint venture between two parties. What we mean by fully-fledged economic cooperation is a region open for business, open for foreign investment. You cannot expect that a flow of capital would come to the region smoothly unless investors feel that this area is secure, stable and predictable, politically and economically.

All the major infrastructural projects and joint ventures being considered at the moment are a basis to ensure solid grounds for cooperation in preparation for full peace.

The picture you have today is very different from the one you could have tomorrow once peace is realised.

Just imagine a world in which the Palestinians could go from their territories to any part of the world, and export their products anywhere, to Arab countries or to Israel. Just imagine that Syria and Lebanon are part of the peace process. These conditions would have attracted investors to the region and made them feel secure.

Let me give you an example of the kind of basis that we are trying to create. In Amman, we will announce the establishment of three major institutions. The first of these, a regional bank will be concerned mainly with financing or co-financing infrastructural projects. It will support the private sector so that it can contribute to regional cooperation.

This bank will take at least two years to be established. But you cannot stop establishing the bank on the assumption that you do not have full peace. You will establish the bank in anticipation of peace.

The second institution, the regional business council, will give business people the opportunity to get together and discuss how to promote business amongst themselves and between the region and the outside world. Its mission would necessarily involve addressing economic policies in the region, pinpointing impediments to better economic and commercial relations and opening channels of communication between the business community and governments in the region.

By establishing a tourism association, we are trying to introduce a new Middle East to the world, but full peace would be a more convincing message. If we had full peace, the task ahead of these institutions would have been different.

In Casablanca, Arab governments were criticised for not going with a clear agenda. Does Egypt have clear objectives to take to Amman?

Egypt submitted a book of projects in Casablanca and it will do the same in Amman. The difference is that Casablanca was the first ever regional economic event. Therefore, the agenda was basically concerned with how to approach this new event.

Can you tell us more about the projects that Egypt is putting forward in Amman?

We are presenting 75 projects in all. There are national projects intended to attract investment, bilateral projects between Egypt and other Arab countries, and projects between Egypt and Israel. There are also projects of a regional nature such as the electricity grid between Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Turkey. This project is being reviewed to involve more parties such as the Palestinians, and maybe the Israelis.

There is also the gas pipeline between Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinians and possibly Israel. Some of the national projects we are proposing have a regional dimension, such as the bridge over the Suez Canal which is being built by Egypt with some financing from Japan.

Behind these projects there is a vision of what we mean by regional cooperation. We believe that under conditions of peace, regional cooperation will be expanded and should not necessarily be restricted to the same parties all the time. A regional project could involve Egypt and other Arab countries, or Egypt and other non-Arab countries in the region, including Israel. We are talking about a wider definition of regional cooperation under conditions of peace. In other words, we are trying to submit a futuristic approach to regional cooperation.

We in Egypt started peace as a mission, and we are now also looking at economic peace as a mission.

At what stage are these projects?

There are projects that are already drawn up and will be presented to the summit as an example of regional cooperation. Other projects will be submitted with a view to attract more investments.

Indeed, we should not exaggerate the outcome of Amman in terms of projects. We must not expect, for example, that we will be able to get offers and finance for the all the 75 projects that we are presenting. We must remember that Amman is a political and economic event. We cannot separate the political significance of Amman from the economic feasibility of the projects being submitted.

Going back to the regional institutions, at what stage are they now?

We have been conducting negotiations on the bank for the last 10 months. Egypt has been negotiating on behalf of the regional parties, namely Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians. The negotiations were tough because we were faced with major differences. The regional parties asked for the establishment of a bank based on the proposal submitted in Casablanca to create a new funding mechanism.

Once a bank is established, it would convey a message to the whole world that this region is economically and politically stable. It will be able to attract additional resources because if you are talking about peace dividends and future regional cooperation you will need additional resources. The bank will not provide additional resources by its own capital which is very modest. But the existence of the bank will help attract investors. A regional bank will also attract private capital which fled the region due to lack of stability. The bank will attract contributions from the international market for the development of the region and promote the region's capital markets which would in turn generate additional resources.

We expect that the bank will be announced in Amman and will be based in Cairo.

What about the business council and the tourism association?

The private sector, particularly in Egypt, played an key role in negotiations concerning these two institutions. A few weeks ago, we met in Amman and agreed on the draft of the charter of the business council. A ministerial statement on the establishment of this council will be initialled by ministers during the conference.

The Middle East/Mediterranean Travel and Tourism Association (MEMTTA) has reached a more progressive point. Its charter has already been initialled by the regional parties and other parties outside the region. It is expected to be signed in Amman and it will have a very short transition period during which a board of governors and an interim executive secretary will be selected. The headquarters for both institutions have not been decided yet.

Is there a consensus among Arab governments on their positions regarding these regional institutions, especially the bank?

There is no unified position for the Gulf States. There are some Gulf states which support the bank. In fact, some of them offered to host the bank. The clear position of the major Gulf countries is that they are not objecting to the bank but rather that they see no need for it. But one has to look a little deeper into their position. Personally, I respect their position. The Gulf countries do not need to have such a bank. More importantly, it might be difficult for the Gulf countries, at this stage, to join an institution which includes Israel with which they do not have peace agreements and relations. In a sense, therefore, their position is justified.

I think that if we were talking about a bank under conditions of peace, we would have had a very different scenario.

Is it true that the foreign ministry wants to limit the size of the entire Egyptian delegation to 40? And if so why?

That is not true.

Is the government trying to limit the number in the private sector delegation?

This was an impression that was created simply because we asked the World Economic Forum and the Jordanian authorities to accept an Egyptian delegation of 150 businessmen. But because of logistical problems they were unable to accept this number, and they suggested a very low number close to the one you mentioned. But we kept exerting pressure till we brought the number of private sector delegates to 75 and we are still trying for more.

And what is the number of the official delegation?

The official delegation is half the size of the private sector delegation.

Is the Egyptian delegation large enough? And how does it compare with the other delegations?

Yes, it is a very large one. You must appreciate that the Jordanians do not have logistics to accomodate larger numbers. The total number of participants originally was only 1200. Now they have been increased to 1500, compared to over 2000 in Casablanca.

Interviewed by ***Ghada Ragab*** *and* ***Samia Nkrumah***

From Davos to Amman

In the run-up to Amman, the message from the industrialised world is that the private sector cannot be left out of the peace process

There is little doubt that the forthcoming Amman summit is closely linked to the Middle East peace process. The three-day summit is also expected to be modelled on the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meetings held in Davos.

After all, the idea of a Middle Eastern and North African economic summit originated in the WEF meeting that brought together PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres shortly after their first Oslo agreement in Septmber 1993. According to Gregory Blatt of the Switzerland-based WEF, which is organising the Amman conference, both men welcomed the suggestion to hold a meeting between governments and the private sector in the Middle East region.

"We cannot let politicians work out peace alone. Businessmen can help in designing a blueprint for peace," said Blatt who appeared last week on the United States Information Agency (USIA) Worldnet television programme linked by satellite to audiences in Cairo, Amman, Casablanca and Jerusalem.

Blatt maintained that peace cannot be sustained without concrete benefits to the people of the region, and that these benefits can only be realised through economic development, which in turn are boosted by increased regional cooperation, trade liberalisation and privatisation.

It is argued that in today's environment of budget-cutting and diminishing state-controlled economies, a stronger private sector is essential to development. Hence the focus in Amman will be on the private sector, stated Blatt.

Linking trade and investment opportunities to dismantled political barriers seems to be one of the main objectives of the Amman summit. "Economic development in the Middle East will cement the peace process," said Blatt, adding that "regional economic cooperation does not happen overnight. It took Europe 50 years and the process is still ongoing."

Unlike the Casablanca conference, countries are sending to Amman "trade ministers and business leaders. Portfolios are shifting away from politics," commented Blatt.

Joining delegates from the US and the EU, will be representatives from the fast developing economies of the Far East and Canada, many of whom did not appear in Casablanca. And while they will be looking for investment opportunities in the region, Amman, like Davos, will not necessarily be a place for signing contracts, striking deals, or conducting business meetings. Rather, as Blatt put it, Amman will oversee a "sophisticated match-making" process where companies will indicate their requirements and locate potential transregional businesses.

By mobilising the region's private sector, the three-day summit is one way of pushing forward the pace of the transition to free market economies in the region. And by advocating free market capitalism, through increased entrepreneurship and liberalised trade, it is a campaign against state-controlled and public spending.

The Amman summit also provides a perfect opportunity to campaign for an end of the Arab boycott of Israel. Blatt stated that the WEF advocates laying the foundation for a regional economy before full peace materialises. "The objective is not to force countries into normalisation, but for economics to help in the normalisation process," said Blatt.

Blatt maintained that the Amman summit must not be regarded as a fund-raising event, but rather an opportunity to discuss actual regional projects, as well as private sector deals.

"Individual increments add up to development," said Blatt.

He stressed that the real key in the long term is to make national and international small and medium-sized enterprises active in bringing their capital to the region and in working across borders to establish joint development projects.

The upcoming summit's concept of a "public-private partnership", is underscored by the fact that the main institutional bodies to be proposed in Amman are targeted at the private sector.

The regional bank is to be an important tool for the private sector. "The consensus on the bank is to support private initiatives. The bank will shift project financing from the public to the private sector," stated Blatt. He added that it is necessary that such a bank assists the private sector in doing feasibility studies, in capitalising on the best borrowing rates and ensuring that loans are paid. Similarly, the Regional Business Council, a private, non-profit association, will also cater exclusively to the needs of the private sector.

At the same time, the onus lies on governments in the region to fulfil their side of the partnership by creating a favourable economic environment for the private sector. This includes liberalising trade policies, reducing regulation, privatising industry and improving the investment climate. "Businessmen want to know how much governments are doing for them," cautioned Blatt, adding that "commitment is as important as a good investment climate."

In the future, a Middle East and North African economic summit is set to become an annual event. "Qatar, Oman and Egypt are possibilities for the future. Ideally the WEF would prefer to have the summit in the Gulf and in Egypt in the near future," said Blatt. With an increasing number of Davos-style business meetings to be held in the region, the debate over which takes precedence, economic cooperation or peace, is likely to come to an end.

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Market report

Manufacturing sector decline

ALL GOOD things must come to an end, and so it was for the General Market Index which, after a three week rebound, lost 0.88 points to close at 214.26 points for the week ending 12 October.

The manufacturing sector shouldered the biggest losses, its index losing 1.8 points to level off at 298.87 points. Shares of the Egyptian International Pharmaceuticals Co. fell by LE7.5 per share to close at LE122.5, while those of the Alexandria Spinning and Weaving Co. lost LE2.25 to reach LE25.65.

The share value of both the Portland Torah Cement Co. and Misr Soft Drinks and Food Co. lost LE0.75 each, to close at LE47.25 and LE27.27, respectively. Swiss Pharma's shares were the week's big loser, declining in value by 20 per cent to close at LE6.

Other manufacturing sector companies, however, did register an increase in share value. El-Nasr Clothes and Textiles (Kabo) gained LE3 per share to close at LE169, while Ameriya Cement Co.'s shares increased by LE0.75 to level off at LE52.5. Misr Chemical Industries topped the market as LE7.83 million worth of its shares changed hands accounting for 21.27 per cent of total market transactions. This represented 46.93 per cent of the number of shares traded. However, its share value increased by only LE0.02 to close at LE20.02 per share.

For the wholesale and retail sector, it was a good week. The sector's index gained 0.52 points to close at 105.97 points. El-Sharqia for Automobiles, Supplies and Transport (EAST) recorded the highest increase in share value, surging by 13.33 per cent of its pervious value to reach LE34.

In the financial sector, shares of the Misr International Bank (MIBank) gained LE10 to close at LE270, while those of the Commercial International Bank (CIB) lost LE3.5 per share to close at LE524.5 per share. The sector's index increased by 0.48 points, closing at LE181.29.

In all, the share values of 24 companies increased, 23 decreased and 42 remained unchanged.

Edited by **Ghada Ragab**







A Palestinian mother, waiting outside the main gate of Nablus Central Prison, waves to her son inside an Israeli police bus. Palestinian prisoners are being transported to other Israeli prisons ahead of the redeployment of Israeli troops in the West Bank, which will place Nablus and other major towns under the control of the Palestinian National Authority *(photo: Reuters)*

Determined to resist

Hitherto ignored by the peace process, South Lebanese are determined to drive Israel and its proxy Lebanese army out of their territory — whatever the cost, writes **Zeina Khodr** from Beirut

Tension has mounted in South Lebanon in the aftermath of guerrilla attacks that killed nine Israeli soldiers in four days. The Lebanese resistance vowed to step up its struggle in spite of threats sounded by Israeli officials of possible retaliation. The upsurge in violence came as Israeli peace negotiations with Syria and Lebanon reached an impasse.

Contact between the two countries' officials has intensified to avert the possibility of a wide-scale Israeli onslaught against villages in South Lebanon. In July 1993, Israel unleashed its most devastating offensive on South Lebanon and the west Bekaa since its invasion in 1982. The attack, codenamed Operation Accountability, left 130 civilians dead and sent thousands fleeing.

The recent violence reached a peak last Sunday when a roadside bomb destroyed an Israeli armoured personnel carrier, killing six soldiers. The attack in the eastern sector of Israel's 15km-wide self-styled security zone in South Lebanon was the bloodiest this year. A similar attack last Thursday killed three Israeli soldiers and wounded six others.

After an emergency meeting, the Israeli cabinet said no radical moves were planned. The government, however, granted the army and Israel's proxy militia, the South Lebanon Army (SLA) "freedom of action" against Iran-backed Hezbollah. The group, which is spearheading attacks to drive Israeli forces out of a buffer zone they occupy in the south, claimed responsibility for the two fatal bombings. So far, 22 Israeli soldiers have been killed in Lebanon this year.

Most Israeli ministers urged only limited action. "There is no doubt that a limited military operation in South Lebanon is required," Yossi Sarid, the environment minister, said. "There is no justification for a big army like ours going to war or undertaking an operation resulting in Katyusha rockets against northern Israel," Communications Minister Shulamit Aloni commented.

Nonetheless, military movements in the security zone have reportedly increased, prompting the Lebanese army to place its forces in a state of alert in the south. Israeli military officials in the area have threatened intense bombardment of villages in South Lebanon if anti-Israeli attacks do not cease.

"Lebanon will pay the price if anti-Israeli guerrilla attacks continue," General Antoine Lahd, the head of the SLA said. He was speaking after talks with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in Marjayoun, South Lebanon.

Israel's opposition Likud Party leader, Benyamin Netanyahu, urged Rabin to strike hard against Hezbollah. "There must be a very tough response .. We'll strike them with power," he said.

Hezbollah, in the meantime, has not succumbed to Israeli threats. It reiterated its commitment to armed struggle to liberate occupied land, adding that its guerrillas would counter any retaliatory measures taken by Israel. Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's chief, urged his fighters to be "fully prepared to face all possibilities on all fronts in the west Bekaa and South Lebanon".

Hezbollah is holding Washington fully responsible for any Israeli attacks against civilian targets. The US, on the other hand, blamed the Lebanese government for the violence in South Lebanon. The Lebanese house speaker, Nabih Berri, vehemently rejected the accusation. He claimed Washington was to blame for the volatile situation in the region.

A Hezbollah source ruled out the possibility of Israel carrying out a major bombing campaign against Lebanese towns and villages. But, as Sheikh Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah's deputy chief, said, "Any retaliatory Israeli shelling of civilian areas in Lebanon will be met by a fierce response on northern Palestine."

Lebanese Defence Minister Mohsen Dalloul met Sheikh Nasrallah to discuss the precarious security situation in South Lebanon. It was their first meeting in more than two years. Political observers said the meeting manifested the government backing of Hezbollah. Israeli pressure will not be able to drive a wedge between the state and Hezbollah, they said. Dalloul described the recent operations as "superb", adding that the attacks were legitimate as long as the occupation continued.

The American Secretary of State Warren Christopher was assured by Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in a telephone conversation last Sunday that Israel's response to Hezbollah attacks would be restrained. Israel army radio said that the two men agreed that the only way to stop violence in South Lebanon was to revive stalled peace talks between Syria and Israel. Negotiations are deadlocked over security arrangements after an Israeli pullout from the Golan Heights and future relations.

Peres maintains that Damascus should curb guerrilla action in Lebanon but doubts whether Syria would stop the violence. "The Syrians are not preventing Hezbollah from attacking us as they could," Israeli army chief, General Amnon Shahak, complained. The US State Department has called on Syria to restrain Hezbollah. Damascus reiterated last week that resistance was the result of occupation and therefore a legitimate right.

Sunday's bloody attack followed an announcement that Christopher would not visit Syria and Israel when he is in the region to attend an economic summit in Amman at the end of the month. Observers in Beirut reported that Christopher's decision is an indication of the many obstacles on the Syrian-Israeli track.

The flare-up in South Lebanon may be an additional incentive for the concerned parties to remove the obstacles from the path of the Middle East peace process. In any case, it reminds them that a comprehensive regional settlement will remain elusive without the inclusion of Syria and Lebanon.

Will Hamas lay down its arms?

Hamas is showing signs of wanting a rapprochement with the PNA but without abandoning its hardline position towards Israel, reports **Tarek Hassan** in Gaza

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Hamas are stepping up efforts to reach an agreement before 20 January 1996, the date scheduled for Palestinian elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Hamas has suggested a date for a meeting with the PNA before the end of this month in Khartoum or Cairo.

Last week witnessed intensive talks between PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and representatives of Hamas. Arafat met with Hamas delegates on their return from Khartoum after consultations with two of the group's leaders there, namely Mohamed Nazal and Emad Al-Almi. Then, last Friday, Arafat met eight delegates representing West Bank Hamas leaders.

Arafat also conferred twice with Sheikh Abdallah Nimr Darwish, leader of Hamas's Israeli Arabs. These meetings were attended by Ahmed Al-Tibi, one of Arafat's advisors, who together with Darwish mediated between Hamas and the PNA.

The outcome of the first meeting Arafat had with Al-Tibi and Darwish was the release of Mahmoud Zahar, a Hamas spokesman who had been in custody for several months. The second meeting resulted in the release of Sheikh Ahmed Bahr, a Hamas leader, last Monday. These measures have laid the groundwork for a PNA agreement with Hamas.

Al-Tayeb Abdel-Rahim, secretary-general of Arafat's office, who is entrusted with handling the PNA's relations with Hamas, said, "An important development has emerged in the dialogue with Hamas. The delegation returning from Khartoum has conveyed to Arafat Hamas's serious intentions of conducting a comprehensive, irrevocable and unconditional dialogue."

However, it appears that this interpretation of Hamas's new stance is being met with caution by some PNA officials. Major General Nasr Youssef, head of the Palestinian police, explained, "There will be no agreement with Hamas unless it declares that it will renounce its military and suicide attacks."

Hamas is prepared to cease its military operations for a year, according to Hamas sources. Since it assumed control over Gaza, the PNA has repeatedly called for a halt to Hamas's military operations launched from the self-rule areas. But Hamas, which had initially rejected this demand, is finding itself in an increasingly difficult position. The self-rule areas are no longer restricted to Gaza and Jericho. Under the Oslo II agreement, the West Bank is now included. Does this mean that Hamas will finally have to abandon its military operations altogether?

No one in Hamas can openly agree to this, particularly as certain sections of the West Bank remain under Israeli control, whether as security zones or Jewish settlements. Hamas may, therefore, want in its talks with the PNA to define the self-rule areas as those in reality under the authority of the PNA, which may theoretically keep the door open for further military operations in areas under Israeli control.

A lot will depend on whether Hamas will be able to extract a commitment from all its factions to an agreement with the PNA. There are significant differences of opinion between Hamas's cadres inside Palestine and those abroad. These differences are apparent in the way Hamas deals with the PNA and Israel.

There are many indications that Hamas's cadres inside the autonomous areas and Israel are showing greater willingness to operate as a political movement. Those abroad, however, still insist on a confrontation with the PNA because they believe that its agreements with Israel were concluded to serve Israeli and American interests.

Even assuming that Hamas's members abroad will be won over to the view of their fellows inside the autonomous areas and Israel, a problem will still remain. What form of agreement can be reached that would enable Hamas to expand and develop?

Those who are in favour of a dialogue with the PNA argue their case on the basis that an agreement will provide Hamas with a respite, thus enabling it to concentrate on its organisational structures and open up new horizons for itself.

What Arafat and the PNA want from Hamas is a different story altogether. They do not want their agreement with Hamas to encounter the same fate as accords between Arab regimes and the Muslim Brotherhood. In other words, the PNA does not want Hamas to benefit from the agreement so that it can build itself up in preparation for confrontation as the Muslim Brotherhood has done. Hence, while Hamas wants the agreement with the PNA to preserve some of its institutions, like the Islamic University in Gaza, and its welfare associations, the PNA is planning to place the former under the control of the Ministry of Education and the latter under the mandate of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Both parties need the agreement, and now. But the agreement's success will not depend solely on their will to cooperate with each other. There is always Israel to consider.

The official Israeli position has changed recently and the Israelis seem keener to encourage an agreement between Hamas and the PNA, especially one that would mean Hamas halting its military activity.

The Israeli authorities, in agreement with the PNA, allowed four Hamas men — Ismail Hannieh, Abdallah Mohanna, Khaled Al-Hindi and Said Al-Tamruti — to meet Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Hamas's spiritual leader, in the Israeli prison of Kfar Yona. The aim of the visit was to obtain his approval for an agreement with the PNA. The Israeli authorities also agreed, after consultations with the PNA, to let the same four men travel to Khartoum to meet Hamas leaders there.

The question is whether the Israeli position is temporary and connected with the forthcoming parliamentary elections in the country, in which Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin hopes to secure a second term in power. If Rabin managed to bring an end to Hamas's operations in the coming months it would nullify one of the right's strongest justifications for campaigning against Oslo II. Or is the Israeli position a strategic one, aimed at overcoming Hamas's resistance so that it finally bows to the current peace process?

Saddam's predictable vote

A ONE-horse race seems easy to win. Whether the referendum in Iraq will revive the power of the weakened, but nonetheless re-elected, president is the real question, writes **Sherine Bahaa**.

Last Sunday's referendum was described by Iraqi officials in Baghdad as the first step towards establishing the regime's constitutional legitimacy.

After announcing the grand victory of Saddam Hussein with 99.96 per cent of votes, Information Minister Youssef Hamadi declared that the regime will disband the Revolutionary Command Council, the highest authority in the country. A parliament will be set up, with 25 elected and 25 appointed members. Deputy Prime Minister Tarek Aziz promised a presidential election soon, with more than one candidate.

Baghdad is now buzzing with predictions, especially over the possibility of the regime's loosening its tight grip on political parties and the press. Such changes, the Iraqi government hopes, will convince the world that Saddam is going to survive despite sanctions. The United States and Britain's main justification for continued sanctions is that they might weaken Saddam to the point where he could be overthrown. Yet, as a result of the referendum the Iraqi president has been granted a new seven-year term.

Salah Mokhtar, editor-in-chief of the Iraqi daily newspaper *Al-Jumhouriya*, said in a telephone interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the results were expected. "It is not a matter of exercising democracy, but rather an exercise of will." Ousting Saddam is the only condition set by the West for removal of the five-year-old economic sanctions, but Iraqis have rejected that condition during the referendum, Mokhtar added.

Nevertheless, the Iraqi National Congress (INC), the main Iraqi opposition front, described the referendum as "a farcical exercise intended to give the appearance of political openness". Saddam's regime is thoroughly discredited in the eyes of the Iraqi people and the regime will certainly intimidate voters and falsify results, the INC statement issued in London said. Mohamed Abdel-Jabar, a prominent figure in the INC, told the *Weekly* he believes that it is impossible to hold free or fair elections in a climate of fear, oppression and censorship. "Today in Iraq, there is no freedom of speech, no free press and no independent judiciary."

An eye on the throne

Confident of Saddam's impending downfall, Sharif Ali Bin Al-Hussein, cousin to King Faisal II of Iraq, has staked his claim to the throne. Interviewed by **Doaa El-Bey** in London, he claims the Iraqi people are behind him

Do you think that the fact that you are descendant of the Hashemite Royal family justifies your claim to the throne? Does this give King Hussein, as a Hashemite, the right to claim the throne in Iraq, as well?

On historical grounds it *may* be enough, but not on modern grounds. One of the conditions I have set for the return of constitutional monarchy (after Saddam) is a referendum to be held in Iraq on what form of government the people want.

My claim to the throne is based upon the demand of the Iraqi people for the return of the monarchy and not on any other factors.

As for King Hussein's possible claim to the throne, he has stated clearly on several occasions that he has no interest, and that the return of the monarchy is an Iraqi and not a Jordanian issue.

Prince Abdullah, King Faisal II's brother and my uncle, was heir to the throne after King Faisal II. But both King Faisal and Prince Abdullah were killed in 1958, the year that witnessed the end of the monarchy. But the Iraqi royal family kinship with King Hussein is not a reason for a foreign head of state to become head of state of Iraq.

You said that Saddam Hussein is on his way out. Is this possible in the foreseeable future?

Yes, the chances of overthrowing the dictatorship are now greater than ever. The regime's powerbase has been shrinking to the extent that it is now relying on a small family circle. All other support has disappeared. The defection of Saddam's sons-in-law and daughters brought into the open the problems he has within this small family structure. This highlights the weakness of the regime.

What needs to be created is the climate, and preparations have to be made. To organise an overthrow of a regime like that of Saddam Hussein is difficult and it will probably be more of a people's revolution than a coup d'état.

Nevertheless we feel the armed forces are now against the government. It is only a matter of time before the regime collapses.

How do you see the future of Iraq?

The future of Iraq hangs in the balance. We have many examples of nations which lost their way and ended up in civil war. Afghanistan and former Yugoslavia are prime examples. That may be Saddam's worst legacy — instability and civil war. But that is not necessarily what will happen. I think the Iraqis will be able to rebuild the nation after the damage caused by Saddam Hussein.

That is what we're asking the world — to be given this opportunity to rebuild our country. We will show the world that Iraq can be a symbol of peace, law, order and good neighbourly relations. Saddam and his family are not typical of the Iraqi people.

The economic situation can be improved. If economic sanctions are lifted and Iraqis are treated justly, then we can move on to build a better economy. Iraq is the wealthiest country in the region in terms of economic and human resources. We can build a paradise instead of Saddam's hell.

What is your relationship with the Iraqi opposition parties in England? Do they accept the idea of the return of a monarchy?

The opposition represents some of the people. The role of the monarchy is to represent all the people and not part of them. The parties are expected to represent a certain constituency, right-wing, left-wing, etc., but they do not represent the whole of Iraq.

We, as a movement, feel that what is now needed is a national symbol around which all Iraqis can unite. What Iraq needs is a rallying point and that is the role we try to play without getting involved in the question of who governs, which should be determined by free elections.

Regarding our relationship with the opposition, we try to maintain ties based on mutual respect and cooperation. The problem with the opposition in exile is that it is scattered all over the world, oppressed by governments and manipulated by all kinds of forces. Therefore they have a tendency to attack each other and not to cooperate. Their differences are far deeper among themselves.

We do not expect all of them to support the monarchy. We are not looking to take over their role. They are free to have their own programmes and political ideologies. What we want is a great system in which they can operate. We do not want a situation like the Kurdish one where a minor conflict over a few issues has led to armed conflict.

How do you assess the recent performance of the Iraqi National Congress (INC)?

When it was launched, there were high hopes on what the INC could achieve, and it did encompass a large part of the opposition.

However, I think it failed internally as it was unable to resolve internal conflicts. The two most active parts of the INC (the Kurdish parties) are in armed conflict, their leaders are denouncing each other and there have been withdrawals and freezing of memberships.

So, unfortunately and very sadly for the Iraqi people, I must emphasise that the INC is not functioning anymore.

You came out of relative oblivion in 1993 to demand the restoration of the monarchy. What were you doing before that?

We emerged organisationally — as the Supporters of Constitutional Monarchy — in 1993. But since 1958, there has been a monarchist movement. We participated in many activities, not in the opposition and not very publicly, but we were in contact with many Iraqi politicians inside and outside.

After many Iraqis came to me and asked if they could launch the movement, and after much discussion and testing of the waters, it became clear this was the desire of the people. We had the official launch in 1993.

We were encouraged by the fact that 80 per cent of the Iraqi people support the return of the monarchy. Our activities are mainly inside Iraq. Our main objective is to make the people understand that a monarchy will preserve the unity of Iraq, that there will be no revenge killings and that we will bring stability and continuity to Iraq and save its institutions.

We realise that not all members of the regime are criminals, some are patriots. To these patriots we send messages urging them to join in the fight against the regime and assure them that they will not be punished.

We are also very active from our offices in Kurdistan to the extent that the regime has attempted to blow up those offices three times. The first and third attempts failed but the second succeeded and destroyed the office in Irbil. We regard it as a measure of our success, and of the threat we are posing to the regime.

Can you describe the shape of the monarchy you hope to establish in Iraq?

Our ultimate aim is to create a constitutional monarchy, where there will be a separation of powers among the executive, legislative and judicial authorities. The role of the monarch will be constitutional. He will protect the constitution, ensure that the government is elected by the people and protect the free environment of democracy and fair play in society.

The monarchy will be a symbol for all Iraqis. There will be a multi-party system with a free press, free trade unions and freedom of expression. We will work for this. We are not saying that it will be achieved from day one. But it can only be achieved through a monarchy.

Edited by **Mervat Diab**

Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

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In the seventh part of a series on Halayeb: The Secret File, **Dr Yunan Labib Rizk** looks at Sudanese attempts to change the status quo with Egypt


Illustration by Makram Henein

After the recent crisis, Sudan has continued to demand the return to the status quo as it stood before March 1992. The Dictionary of Diplomacy and International Affairs defines status quo as " a Latin expression meaning to preserve the state of affairs as it is or as it was without effecting subsequent legal changes". The term is widely used among scholars of political science, law and history.

The "status quo" of the area north of the 22nd degree parallel, known as the Halayeb triangle, is unique, both for the divergence of opinion over what exactly constituted the status quo and for the duration of the status quo.

The Sudanese believe that their 90 year (1902-1992) administration over Halayeb constitutes a status quo that now entitles them to sovereignty over a portion of land which should be considered an integral part of Sudan.

Egypt, of course, has an entirely different outlook. For the majority of that 90 year period (1902-1952), Sudan was under Egyptian sovereignty. In other words, all Sudanese territories, and not just the Halayeb triangle, were part of Egypt. In addition, throughout this period, Egypt freely exercised its rights of sovereignty over Halayeb. The Egyptian army could and did move its army to and from the area without need to seek the permission of authorities in Sudan. Moreover, licenses to mine in the area continued to be issued from the appropriate authority based in Cairo.

Egypt was also quick to confirm its sovereignty over the area. The 90 years claimed by the Sudanese can actually be compressed into a two-year period dating from the declaration of Sudanese independence in January 1956 to the first Egyptian-Sudanese border crisis in 1958. This crisis subsided when Egypt agreed to maintain the status quo until after the Sudanese elections. The fact that this status quo remained in effect for over another three decades requires explanation.

Firstly, there was a question of priorities in Egyptian-Sudanese relations. With the construction of the High Dam in progress, Egyptian officials wanted to conclude a new agreement on the partition of waters between the two countries to supersede the agreement that had been signed in 1929. To have raised the Halayeb issue at this juncture would have hindered the negotiations that resulted in a new agreement signed in 1959.

Secondly, there has always been a special relationship between Egypt and Sudan. In spite of the declaration of Sudanese independence, officials in Cairo continued to view Sudan in light of permanent historical ties that characterised this relationship. Therefore, when it came to the problem of resolving the border question, officials in Cairo found themselves in a predicament. If the government in Khartoum was on friendly terms with Egypt, officials in Cairo were reluctant to embarrass it. If, on the contrary, relations were tense, they feared playing into the hands of officials in Khartoum who would exploit the issue to gain public sympathy at home. Thus, we believe, the best alternative for decision-making circles in Cairo was to maintain the status quo.

Two further factors contributed to the preservation of the status quo throughout the presidential terms of Nasser and Sadat and most of President Mubarak's.

The first was that Sudan never made an attempt to change the status quo in Halayeb. Egypt continued to exercise its rights to mining in the area. The Egyptian Phosphate Company continued to extract phosphate and distribute it throughout Egypt without encountering the slightest objection on the part of the Sudanese authorities. Also, as the war of attrition with Israel escalated in the early 1970s, Egyptian authorities placed ten air observation points in the area to monitor the incursions of Israeli aircraft into Egyptian territory. These were observation points Badia 1-10. Again, the Sudanese administrative authorities never voiced the slightest objection. Egyptians naturally took this as indicative of their continued right of sovereignty over Halayeb. As we said previously, the Sudanese military never entered the area, at least before 1956, for according to official treaties, the protection of the area was entrusted to the Egyptian armed forces.

Secondly, throughout the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s Egyptian-Sudanese relations enjoyed a lengthy honeymoon. This was the period that bore the fruits of the policy of integration which was considered a new formula for the unity of the Nile Valley and which many had called for as early as 20 years previously. Those who lived through this period cannot easily have forgotten the many celebrations reported by the various news media for the joint sessions of the Egyptian and Sudanese parliaments. This was not an appropriate time to deflate the honeymoon with the thorn of the Halayeb triangle, which at any rate many thought would be resolved within the framework of the policy of integration.

The recent Halayeb crisis was sparked by what the Sudanese took to be a change in the status quo of the area to the north of the 22nd degree parallel. In March 1992, the Egyptian armed forces set up another observation point, Badia 11, and converted two other points into permanent positions with the construction of buildings. The Sudanese demanded the return to the situation as it had stood before.

The Sudanese demand fell on deaf ears in Egypt. Rather, the Egyptians went ahead to change the status quo that had been in effect since 1958. What suddenly compelled authorities in Egypt to change their former position on preservation of the status quo?

One cannot find the answer in the 100-square-mile (1850 square kilometres) Halayeb triangle alone (although we should note that the conflict over Taba involved an area of little more than a square kilometre). The answer, we believe, is to be found in the developments in Egyptian-Sudanese relations in the wake of the military coup led by Omar Al-Bashir on 30 June 1989. Never, since 1924, had Egyptian-Sudanese relations undergone such dramatic change — changes which would profoundly affect the status quo between the two countries.

The degree of change can be seen in the attempts of Sudan's ruling "National Salvation" government to shake the firm foundations of Egyptian-Sudanese relations.

Egypt's educational role in Sudan had been a virtually permanent feature in these relations regardless of changing circumstances. Even before the creation of the modern state in Egypt, Sudanese students came to Al-Azhar where they had their own wing. After completing their education, they would return home to spread their learning. In the middle of the 19th century, Abbas I sent a delegation of the most learned men in Egypt to teach in Sudan. The delegation was headed by the renowned Rifaa Al-Tahtawi who eventually died in Sudan. During the period of dual administration, Egyptian schools spread throughout Sudan, from Tangasa in the north to Juba in the south. Not only did the Egyptian educational presence continue after independence, it expanded. University level education was extended to Sudan through the Khartoum branch of Cairo University, which eventually comprised all branches of theoretical and scientific colleges. Not only that, but it endured under five successive Sudanese governments (the first parliamentary government 1956-58, the first military government 1958-64, the second parliamentary government 1964-69, the second period of military rule 1969-75, and the second parliamentary government 1985-89). For over three decades after Sudanese independence, not a single Sudanese ruler encroached on the educational foundation of Egyptian-Sudanese relations. Egyptian educational institutions played a vital role in preserving the national Arab character of Sudan, in contrast to the European style education that had been set up by the British with Gordon College that later changed its name to the University of Khartoum. Suddenly, the new regime ordered the merger of Egyptian schools with the Sudanese school system and the closure of the 40 year old branch of Cairo University. With a stroke of the pen, one of the most enduring foundations in Egyptian-Sudanese relations received its strongest shock.

The new regime in Sudan also dealt a blow to a second foundation in the relations between the two countries. Egypt had always felt that any threat to its national security came from the east or west or from the north across the Mediterranean. Sudan had always represented a strategic depth that buffered Egypt from threats from all directions. A quick survey of Egyptian history over the past half century confirms this.

In 1942, when Egypt was under attack from the Axis powers coming from the west, the government in Egypt had packed its papers and was on the point of moving to Khartoum. Fortunately, the attack was thwarted at the last moment at El-Alamein.

When Egypt was threatened by Israel's aggression in 1967, Egypt sent some of its conscripts to Sudan for military training.

Egyptian personnel, as had always been the case, received a warm welcome from the Sudanese authorities.

But that Sudan itself should pose a threat to Egypt's national security is an unprecedented break with traditional Egyptian-Sudanese relations and an unexpected breach of the status quo. Suddenly Egypt finds that its neighbour to the south has allied itself with Egypt's rival, Iran. Needless to say, Iran is not so much interested in furthering the interests of Sudan as it is in putting pressure on Egypt. Sudan is also supporting Islamic extremists. It infiltrates them across the border into Egypt and smuggles arms to them, with the ultimate goal of destabilising Egypt. Last but not least is Sudan's involvement in the assassination attempt on the Egyptian president in Addis Ababa. In other words, not only has Sudan breached all the norms in Egyptian-Sudanese relations, it has infringed on all accepted principles of international relations. Evidently, the Sudanese regime had been so certain of the success of the assassination attempt that it had not prepared itself for the grave consequences of its failure.

The third foundation to be shaken involves the waters of the Nile, which have been virtually sacrosanct in the relations between the two countries. True, Khartoum never went so far as to violate this sanctity, but it has dropped hints. During the Gulf War, when Khartoum took an antagonistic position to that of Cairo, Sudan threatened to bomb the High Dam with missiles it received from Iraq.

After the unsuccessful assassination attempt on Mubarak, one of the regime's leaders, Dr Hassan Al-Turabi, announced that Sudan was prepared to prevent the waters of the Nile from reaching Egypt.

Given this gross departure from the status quo in Egyptian-Sudanese relations it was only natural that the rift move to the Halayeb triangle, the final chapter of the changing status quo.

In reality, the first attempt to alter the status quo in Halayeb dates prior to Bashir's June 1989 coup. This occurred when the Sudanese administrative authorities, backed by military force, moved to prevent the Egyptian Phosphate Company from transporting its output to the rest of Egypt. The Egyptian government ignored this act, sensing that it was only part and parcel of Sudanese party rivalries. Similarly, Egypt voiced no objection when the government of Al-Sadeq Al-Mahdi announced that it wanted to end the Charter of Integration and replace it by a "brotherhood charter". Another reason why Egypt voiced no objection to the Sudanese encroachment on Halayeb at the time, was that it perceived that the parliamentry government in Sudan was on the verge of collapse.

Although at first Egypt welcomed the coup mounted by *Bashir*, it soon became apparent from a number of measures implemented between 1990 and 1992 that the new regime intended to proceed along its course of altering the status quo in the Halayeb triangle. First, it granted Canadian petroleum companies the right to drill for oil in the region. The granting of such concessions had always been Egypt's perogative under the conditions of the sovereignty it exercised over the area. Following this, it granted a team from a Japanese university a license to excavate for antiquities in the area. Finally, it sent its propagandists to the Bishari tribes in the region to invite them to form "popular committees".

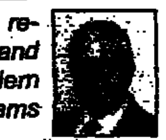
In short, the Bashir regime, most likely in order to gain popular support at home, began to equate Sudanese administration of the area with sovereignty. No Egyptian government could continue to ignore this. Compelled by humanitarian and political motives, Egyptian decision makers called for an end to the Sudanese administration and insisted that Egypt should exercise its rights of sovereignty over that portion of Egyptian territory. Throughout its 90 year administration over Halayeb, the Sudanese did nothing to improve the primitive living conditions of the Bishari inhabitants. Without elementary health or educational services and public utilities, particularly essential for that arid area severely lacking in fresh water resources, the Sudanese administration forfeited its reason for existence.

The Egyptian government acted quickly to create relief committees to provide essential foodstuffs for the area and it instituted the system of subsidy cards that is applied throughout the rest of the country. It also brought in fresh water, electricity and schools for the first time in their lives. The Bishari were given the choice to remain in Sudan or to adopt Egyptian citizenship and to receive an Egyptian identity card. Most opted for the latter.

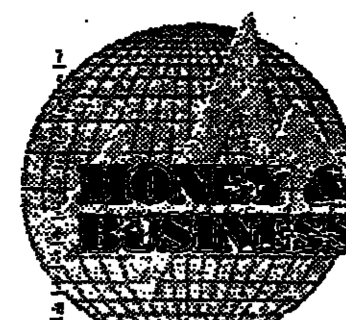
As for the political reasons, these were provided by the Bashir government. For the first time in the history of Egyptian-Sudanese relations, Egypt was given the opportunity to correct a *situation* it had long wished to set right, had it not been afraid of antagonizing the government in Khartoum. Yet given the policies adopted by Bashir's government, officials in Cairo decided there could not possibly be a more antagonistic government than that currently holding the reins of power in Sudan.

This serves to explain subsequent Egyptian actions, such as adding another air observation point (Badia 11) and increasing the Egyptian military presence to 5000 troops, according to President Mubarak's recent statements. The most significant action of these troops to date was to remove the Sudanese border posts at the old administrative boundary in Shalatin and to p;ace signs along the international boundary at the 22nd degree parallel. This finally marked the end to the status quo that had existed for 33 years.

The author is a renowned historian and a professor of modern history at Ain Shams University.







Qualifying NGOs

As non-governmental organisations have grown to play a key role in providing social, cultural and medical services, the need has arisen to enhance their managerial and administrative skills. In this context the Management Development Institute at the American University in Cairo will provide training courses in all branches of management.

Mohamed Rafaat Wahba, manager of the institute, said that similar courses have been organised over the past 5 years and provided help for NGOs in their restructuring process.

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NBE and new job opportunities for young graduates in mobile outlets and marketing services

With the advent of 1995, the economic reform programme was geared towards enhancing the production and marketing of commodities, with hopes of accelerating the development process and raising standards of living. In an attempt to support the Egyptian government's determined efforts to mitigate the negative repercussions of the reform programme, the National Bank of Egypt (NBE), being the animator of the Egyptian banking system, adopted a project for employing graduates in mobile outlets and marketing services. The project's contract was concluded by NBE, the Ministry of Supply and the Social Fund for Development.

The project aims at creating new job opportunities for young graduates and those in brackets heavily struck by the adverse effects of the reform programme, to pave the way for them to become future entrepreneurs. In addition, the project will allow a balance to be struck between the demand for and supply of food and consumer commodities via supply increase and price control. Also, the multiple steps separating producers from consumers will be eliminated and commodities will reach consumers directly, through a sophisticated marketing system which will serve internal trade in new cities and random communities.

The project will be implemented in four successive phases over a course of seven years, establishing 2000 marketing and services projects which will provide 4000 permanent job opportunities besides 2000 temporary ones.

The Social Fund for Development has allocated a LE40 million loan for the project to be managed by NBE in cooperation with the Ministry of Supply. The implementation of the first phase is to take place soon in Cairo, Giza and Qalyubiya. The bank shall provide loans to beneficiaries with a maximum of LE50,000 each. The loans, which bear a 9 per cent simple annual interest rate, are to be repaid within 6 years after a 12 month grace period.

The project is expected to shatter traders' monopolies over some basic commodities while creating job opportunities for young graduates, who will be relieved of locating a premises for their activities. This, in addition to supplying food and consumer commodities at fair prices.

Egyptian businessmen in CEBIT 96

The German-Arab Chamber of Commerce extended an invitation for a group of Egyptian companies to take part in the CEBIT '96 exhibition to be held in Hanover, Germany.

The exhibition, with 6300 participants, will display the latest in information and telecommunication technology.

Among the items on display will be satellites, mobile telecommunication sets and a wide range of telecommunication products which are used at conferences and are essential for data transfer.

ZEIN



Poised for an upturn

Indian Premier Rao's visit to Cairo was a timely reminder that the South is hoping for an 11th hour reinvigoration of the Non-Aligned Movement, writes **Gamal Nkrumah**



Egypt and India coordinate NAM strategy in a meeting last week between President Mubarak and Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao

New Delhi is some 12,000 kilometres away from Colombia's Caribbean resort city of Cartagena, the venue of this week's Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) meeting. Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao, dare one say it, had to break his journey at some point. He chose to stop over in Cairo for a brisk 24-hour official visit. He could have stopped in any other capital in Africa, the Middle East, the Mediterranean or even Europe, but he didn't. So why Cairo?

Like Egypt, the challenge facing India today is to maintain its nerve in combating terrorism and managing economic deregulation. Egypt is different from India in more ways than one. But, there are two significant parallels. First, the two countries have come to the realisation almost simultaneously that they need radical economic reshaping. "Significantly, both countries embarked on radical economic deregulation policies in June 1990," noted India's ambassador to Egypt, Kanwal Sibal, in an interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly* last week. Ambassador Sibal has been in the country for barely a month.

Second, it is no secret that Cairo and New Delhi compare notes on their respective anti-terrorist campaigns. India's Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act attracted international attention this week when a movie-goers' heart-throb was released on bail by India's Supreme Court after two years of incarceration under the controversial act. The anti-establishment and pro-underdog causes adopted by film star Sanjay Dutt endeared him to the masses and projected his case to the Indian public as a national *cause célèbre*. Behind the turmoil generated by terrorism lie momentous changes in Indian society.

It would be wrong to read too much into the Indian premier's stopover — or rather official visit as I was repeatedly corrected by Ambassador Sibal — but then it would be wrong too to overlook its symbolic importance.

The visit highlighted the Indo-Egyptian design for launching a new round of reinforcing the NAM's foundations and reshaping its destiny. The chief purpose of the visit was to foster both economic and political bilateral relations. The agreements signed between Egypt and India this week cover information, science and technology, and cooperation in the field of combating terrorism. Premier Narasimha Rao was accompanied by his Minister of State for External Affairs R L Bhatia and Minister of State Bhuvnesh Chaturvedi. Both India and Egypt want to save as much as possible of the NAM's past agenda, but they also want to address the movement's institutional reform in the post-Cold War period. There is also an understanding that the perceived erosion of the two NAM founding nations' traditional championing of Third World causes must be laid to rest.

A small rush of excitement was felt this week at Cartagena; economic growth in the South is accelerating regardless of the slump in the North. Moreover, according to the most recent *World Economic Outlook* report of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), by the turn of the century the South will generate a larger share of world output than the North. But, then some of us Third Worlders are never satisfied.

Was the NAM born under an unlucky star? There is much to be cynical about. The Cartagena summit was the 11th NAM summit meeting, but the South is as divided as ever. Third World nations searched for a consensus at the NAM meeting in Cartagena. Unfortunately, the NAM has yet to achieve the political clarity necessary for a concerted policy. Nor have matters been helped by a new world order every bit as inclined to grandstand at the expense of the South's prosperity as the old bipolar world.

Third World leaders meeting in Cartagena put aside political differences in order to boost trade relations and create a united front at the United Nations to pass resolutions deemed advantageous to NAM member-states. UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali is expected to look closely into NAM proposals for the revamping of the UN charter to permit Third World nations to secure a representative seat on the UN's Security Council.

No elixir of eternal youth was expected to be offered at Cartagena to make the NAM live forever. And, Cairo and New Delhi are not in the business of prolonging the movement's life unnecessarily. But they are both clambering onto the economic deregulation train. Over the past five years, both Egyptians and Indians have been through some important political debates about improving economic performance. However, both nations know that social dislocations in the rapidly developing countries of the South, resulting from sweeping economic reforms, can threaten political stability.

Wholesale economic reforms were instituted in both Egypt and India five years ago. But, the powerful vested interest groups in the two countries were most reluctant to dismiss long-upheld socialist-oriented policies as an unrealistic ambition. The establishment in both nations for a long time risked reducing their respective countries' credibility ratings among foreign investors.

In the international arena, India is widely seen as a potential economic superpower. Its prestige could be further enhanced next week if it secures a permanent seat at the UN's Security Council. Economically, India has not done badly in the 1990s either. Investment as a portion of gross domestic product is on the rise, and India is far more dependent on domestic capital than on any inflows from abroad.

Indian policy-makers, perhaps more than those in most other nations, are better able to understand how the new internationalism only works if it is seen as a way of accomplishing, or at least not hindering, national objectives. There are, for example, fewer Indian diplomats dispersed in Indian diplomatic missions worldwide than Egyptian diplomats in Egyptian diplomatic missions abroad. This, despite the fact that India's population is over 900 million while Egypt's is 60 million. India's diplomatic missions abroad are largely restricted to countries with which India trades extensively, or in which large expatriate Indian communities reside.

Even as the world is becoming more integrated and interrelated, it is also growing more divided, especially in the political arena. India's unwillingness to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), for example, has ruffled many feathers in the West. Irrespective of what the West might think, India insists that the NPT does not necessarily make for a nuclear-free world since it permits the vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons by a select few states that possess nuclear weapons to the exclusion of the many non-nuclear nations.

There are those who see India as a potentially menacing power. But, standing at $7.6, India's per capita defence expenditure is only a fraction of America's — 0.7 per cent of it to be precise. Between 1987 and 1992, India's defence spending registered a negative growth rate of 4.68 per cent. Defence spending in 1993-94 was down almost 10 per cent from the previous year's level of $6.6 billion.

By one of history's coincidences, economic liberalisation and market capitalism has come home to roost in both Egypt and India at the same time. Trade has been high on both countries' agendas. The volume and value of Indian exports stagnated during the 1950s and 1960s. But, as of the late 1980s, the drive to improve export competitiveness ensured that the Indian economy became more integrated within the global economy. The volume of trade between Egypt and India increased by 64 per cent between 1992 and 1994 and now stands at an estimated $154 million.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) warned in a report released recently that exports from Asia's "Big Three" — China, India and Indonesia — may have a depressing effect on employment opportunities in a number of industrially advanced countries of the North. "The rapid growth in OECD exports to those countries is creating new jobs even as some traditional manufacturing sector jobs are lost," the OECD report stated. According to the report, sound macro-economic policies, competitive exchange rates, strong export orientation and increasingly liberal trade and foreign investment regimes are the keys to the rapid industrialisation and economic growth of the countries of the South.

The world needs no reminders that India plays a prominent global role. A fifth of the world's people are Indian. Few nations have their foreign policy directives so securely placed on the new buzzword of international relations in the post-Cold War period. The Indian diaspora in Africa, the Caribbean, South East Asia, North America, Australia and Britain ensure that Indian policy-makers are necessarily internationalists. What country is, or could be, simultaneously both as international and as self-consciously proud of its own cultural specificity as India? India has, perhaps more than any other nation, come closest to being regarded as the unacknowledged leader of the NAM.

Regional tensions among NAM member-states are irremediably ruinous. Egypt promoted disarmament in the Middle East at the Cartagena summit — and it needed India's support. India too solicits Egypt's support in fostering peace in the South Asian sub-continent. Egypt and India drew solidarity from anti-colonialism and a quest for autonomy as Moscow and the West used poorer countries as a rostrum for their struggle during the Cold War period. Today, Indo-Egyptian mutual support in easing regional tensions is still important.

The critical question in today's international politics is whose share of world trade is growing fastest. India's might not be growing at as fast a rate as that of some of the newly industrialised East Asian nations, but it is getting bigger. Whether the India of tomorrow emerges as an incontestable world power or a dubious regional bully depends on its economic performance in the coming decade. Today few are the international investors who want to leave India alone.

War without end

Islamabad has good reason to fear Afghanistan's Taliban, writes **Eqbal Ahmad**

The government of Afghanistan was rightly condemned for its sponsorship of the assault on the Pakistani Embassy in Kabul. The mob which stormed the embassy, killing a Pakistani and injuring, among others, Ambassador Qazi Humayun was neither spontaneous nor unexpected.

When the Taliban captured Shindand's strategic air base on 3 September, Kabul was quick to blame Pakistan's hand in it. When Herat fell to the Taliban two days later Kabul's allegations carried portents of revenge. Pakistani officials remained unmindful. The families of Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani and associates, who were living in the Peshawar and Islamabad-Rawalpindi area, departed from Pakistan before the mob struck. Somehow Islamabad's all-seeing official eyes failed to notice their exit until after Pakistan decided to expel the departed families.

If Pakistan's government was in the business of governance, there would be a serious inquiry and fixing of responsibility for this lapse of security-related intelligence.

The outrage that has been widely expressed over the violation of Pakistan's diplomats is justified. But outrage does not substitute for analysis; nor can it compensate for failure of policy which, given Pakistan's investments in Afghanistan, has been colossal. To begin with, consider the extraordinary reversal of Pakistan's relations with President Burhanuddin Rabbani and his defence minister, Ahmed Shah Masoud. They are two of the earliest recruits to Islamabad's Afghan "game plan", conceived and initiated in 1973. Its authors were Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his advisor on frontier affairs, General Naseerullah Khan Babar, successively the commander of the Frontier Corps, governor of North West Frontier Province and now Pakistan's minister of interior. I heard the story in 1985 from General Babar who was most thoughtful about aiding a scholar's research. In those days Mohamed Zia Ul-Haq was taking undue credit for sponsoring the successful *jihad*. General Babar's revelation helped deflate Zia's claims. A brief recapitulation follows:

In a tit-for-tat against General Mohamed Daud Khan's sponsorship of the Pakhtunistan movement, Bhutto and his aides proceeded to sponsor an Islamic insurgency in Afghanistan. There were two sets of Afghan dissidents to choose from: communists and Islamists. Pakistan preferred the latter. They were contacted, seemed grateful to find a sponsor and moved to Pakistan where training camps were set up for them. When ready, their Islamic uprising was launched in the Panjsheer Valley which remains to date the stronghold of Rabbani and Masoud. The Mujahideen's first forays into Afghanistan were military muddles. Failure notwithstanding, General Daud got the message, made conciliatory gestures to Pakistan and, with the patronage of Iran's shah, began cautiously to mend relations with Islamabad.

The rebels remained as guests and proxies, Pakistan's bargaining chips. Among Islamabad's other rebel protégés were Gulbadin Hikmatyar and Abdur Rasul Sayyaf who would later change his name to Abdur Rab, on being converted to Wahhabism. This is where things stood when, taking advantage of Bhutto's political crisis, Zia Ul-Haq broke his soldier's oath, violated the constitution and staged a coup d'état.

It is logical that, after the Saur Revolution occurred in April 1978, the first person the United States' Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) contacted for information on and introductions to Afghanistan's Islamic revolutionaries was General Naseerullah Khan Babar who obliged the best he could. As in many other instances, the dictator picked up the policy where Bhutto had left off and carried it to its logical extreme.

At the expense of diversion, I should mention that Maulavi Sayyaf is the only Pakhtun Mujahid leader to be part of the government in Kabul. But alliances can change overnight in Afghanistan too. After all horse trading and dog eating are not a Pakistani monopoly. So do not be surprised if Abdur Rab Sayyaf changes loyalties in the coming weeks. That would indicate a hardening of the tragically growing ethnic divide in Afghanistan.

I have recalled this story for the lessons it holds. One is that policy calculations should be based on estimations of interests of countries and peoples, not of loyalties of individuals or groups. For, the latter can and do change loyalties. Thus individuals and parties Pakistan supported for a quarter of a century have become hostile to Islamabad and bitterly complain of Pakistani hostility to them. In the Pakistani media and official statements, Rabbani and Masoud are portrayed as turncoats who have ungratefully become anti-Pakistan and pro-India. This is a misleading conclusion which can hinder rational formulation of policy.

There has been a process to this embitterment. Several Afghanistan watchers had forewarned over the years of its consequences. Some weeks ago I recalled in this space the defensive reactions Pakistan's highest officials had to these warnings. But the habit of playing favourites persisted. Today there is reliance on the Taliban, Hikmatyar and Dostum as though the sum total of Pakistan's alliances with these warlords will be a viable policy. Recently, a very thoughtful senior soldier wondered aloud: "What can happen to our Afghan posture if Abdul Rashid Dostum pulls out?" He was right. The Taliban-Hikmatyar edifice on which Pakistan is so precariously perched will collapse if this formerly communist warlord changes position. He might, notwithstanding the complicating entry of Uzbekistan into the Afghan equation.

Pakistani decision-makers have had a lasting proclivity to substitute manipulation for policy and gamesmanship for statesmanship. They focus on immediate gains and do not make long-term calculations of a policy's fall-out. This tendency is an extension of their style in domestic politics whereby there is a premium on buying the support of individuals and groups irrespective of the long-term costs to country and the state. Thus to accommodate a petty need of the moment, Azim Tariq, the hate-mongering leader of the Anjuman-i-Sipahi-Sahaba, was moved with a flick of prime ministerial finger from prison to parliament. Never mind the price to the rule of law, to threatened minorities and to social peace in the land. Is it a mere coincidence that two weeks later a 14-year-old and her school principal are being hounded on charges of blasphemy? This mind-set of petty opportunism is also reflected in the conduct of Islamabad's foreign policy.

Take for instance Pakistan's current posture — denials notwithstanding — of favouring the Taliban. With Pakistani help they installed themselves in Qandahar, and promptly banned music and games as un-Islamic. We were interested merely in adding a chip on our chessboard. But our position in Afghanistan is similar to America's in Pakistan whereby our smallest gesture takes on grand significance. And so it did in Kabul; and also in Iran, Tajikistan and Russia — countries which view Pakistan's policy apprehensively as seeking unitary Pashtun control of the Afghan state, and a monopoly of Pakistani domination there. The Taliban's dramatic gains this month, which include the capture of Herat, the Persian-speaking city on Iran's border, has greatly augmented Iran's and Tajikistan's concerns and Russia's interest. Dostum's entry on our side has merely accentuated the problem. Unless Pakistan makes amends — its foreign minister's visit to Tehran may have been a step in this direction — Islamabad may win enemies to the north and west also.

"Uzbekistan will never misunderstand and always support our policy," said a high-ranking official who enjoys a friendship with the Uzbek dictator Islam Karimov. Uzbek warlord Abdur Rashid Dostum's recent cooperation with the Taliban is seen in Tehran and Dushanbe as an entente between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. The Tajiks identify with their nearly four million brethren in Afghanistan and nourish historic resentment and fear of the Uzbeks. Hence Rabbani's Jamiat can count on Tajikistan's support if Dostum has Uzbekistan's backing. Such alliances can have little military significance. They underwrite protracted Afghan violence, greater regional tension and distortions in Pakistan's social and political life.

Nowhere is the distortion of political life more severe than here. Drugs, guns, sectarianism, violence and crime; Pakistan experiences them all. They can get worse. The Taliban's successes, for example, will hurt Pakistan deeply. Products of Pakistani *madaris* they have links in Pakistan and spawn there. Harakat Ul-Ansar, their Pakistani counterpart, is already born and growing. Like the Taliban, they are a rabid anti-Shia party with an Islamic agenda the Prophet would have found repugnant. The chickens of proxy wars and manipulation politics always come home to roost. If Pakistan keeps going this way it cannot insure peace or its place in Afghanistan. But as surely as night follows day Pakistan shall lose itself and what is left in Pakistan of decency and civilisation.



FIDEL Castro of Cuba waves upon his arrival at the airport in Bariloche, Argentina on 15 October. Castro was in Bariloche to attend the Iberoamerica summit where leaders from Spain, Portugal and some twenty Latin American countries met to discuss strengthening relations between Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries in Europe, South and Central America and the Caribbean *(photo: AFP)*



BANGLADESHI demonstrators took to the streets in a show of solidarity with anti-government strikers who brought the country to a standstill this week *(photo: AFP)*

New bridges across Africa

FOR SEVERAL decades South Africa's relations with the Middle East were confined to Israel, particularly in the military domain where South Africa acquired advanced Western military technology through Israel. That relationship was subject to criticism from the international community at the official level, while it was informally supported by some Western powers that hoped to contain Soviet influence in Africa and the Indian Ocean, writes **Walid Abdel-Nasser.**

There currently exist differences in the ranks of the African National Congress (ANC), which leads the Government of National Unity, over the country's relationship with Israel. Some do not want to forget that Israel supported the apartheid regime despite its formal denunciation of the racially discriminatory system.

From 1992 onwards, Arab states started normalising diplomatic relations with South Africa. In October 1993, Bahrain and South Africa established diplomatic relations and the South African foreign minister opened his country's embassy in Manama. One month later, a similar development took place between Kuwait and South Africa while normalisation of relations procedures began with Saudi Arabia. In December 1993, a South African military office was established in Kuwait. The most significant development came in May 1994 when diplomatic relations were established between South Africa, on the one hand, and Egypt, Syria, Morocco, Tunisia, Iran, Algeria, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Libya, on the other.

Pretoria received a military delegation from the UAE and sent trade missions to Iran, Bahrain and Dubai. President Mandela visited Morocco on more than one occasion and Vice-President Mbeki followed in his footsteps. The South African president also conducted a tour of Arab Gulf states and paid a separate visit to Saudi Arabia.

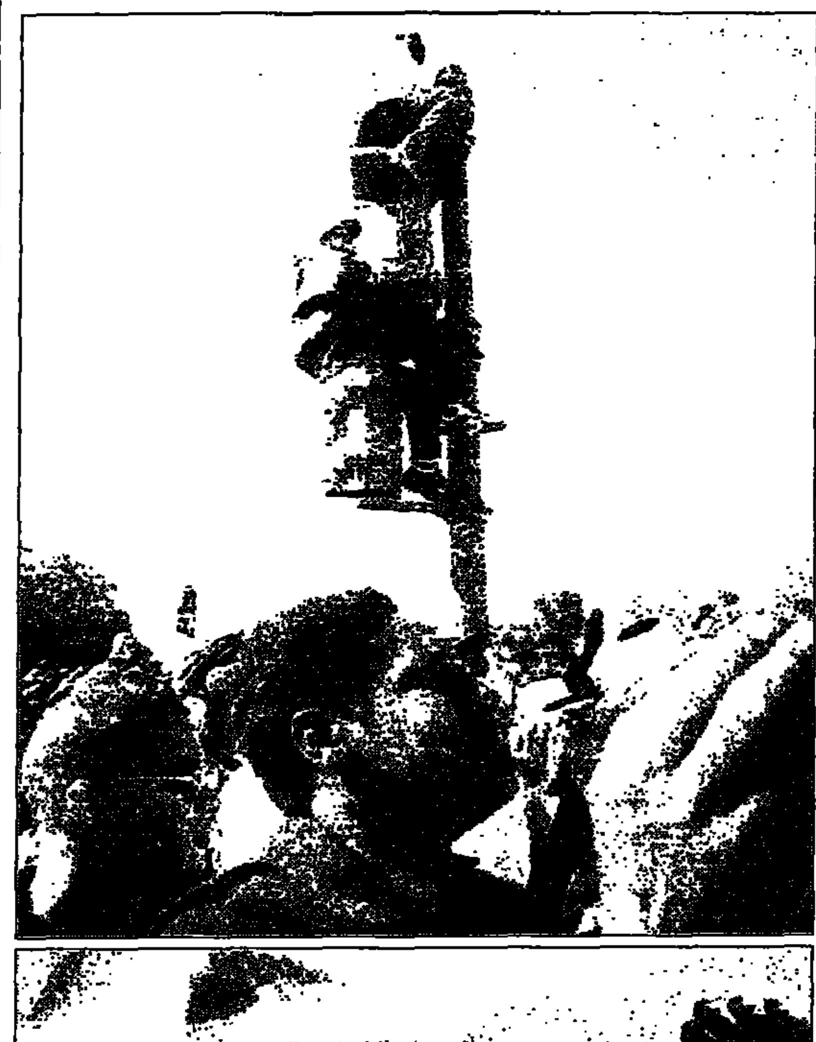
In July 1994, the defence minister of South Africa visited the UAE while its foreign minister conducted a tour that included Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait and Iran and led to the establishment of a joint Omani-South African Commission. By early 1995, the Saudi oil minister, accompanied by a large number of Saudi businessmen, had visited Pretoria. In April of the same year, the Tunisian president visited South Africa and concluded a number of bilateral agreements related to the economy and tourism.

Despite early protests from Nigeria, South Africa decided to import substantial amounts of its oil requirements from Gulf states in return for advanced technology, particularly in the military sector. More than 20 South African companies took part in the UAE military air fair of 1995. Such participation heralded South Africa's penetration of Middle Eastern markets and enhanced rates of trade with the region. South Africa's trade with Gulf states surpassed $1 billion in 1995, up from $140 million in 1992. Direct cargo flights between Durban and Dubai were initiated in April 1993. One year later conferences were held in Dubai, Manama and Tehran under the banner of "enhancing relations with South Africa".

A number of countries, however, have expressed concern over South Africa's alleged exportation of weapons to Sudan. Moreover, it was revealed that South African weapons reached South Yemen through Lebanese businessmen during the Yemeni civil war in the summer of 1994, according to Sanaa's authorities. Such practices were denounced by the ANC and the Government of National Unity ordered investigations, which revealed that weapons were exported to other destinations after the end of apartheid in April 1994. Some observers argue that the US has impeded South African arms deals to Middle Eastern states that seek — for both political and economic reasons — to diversify their sources for military supplies.

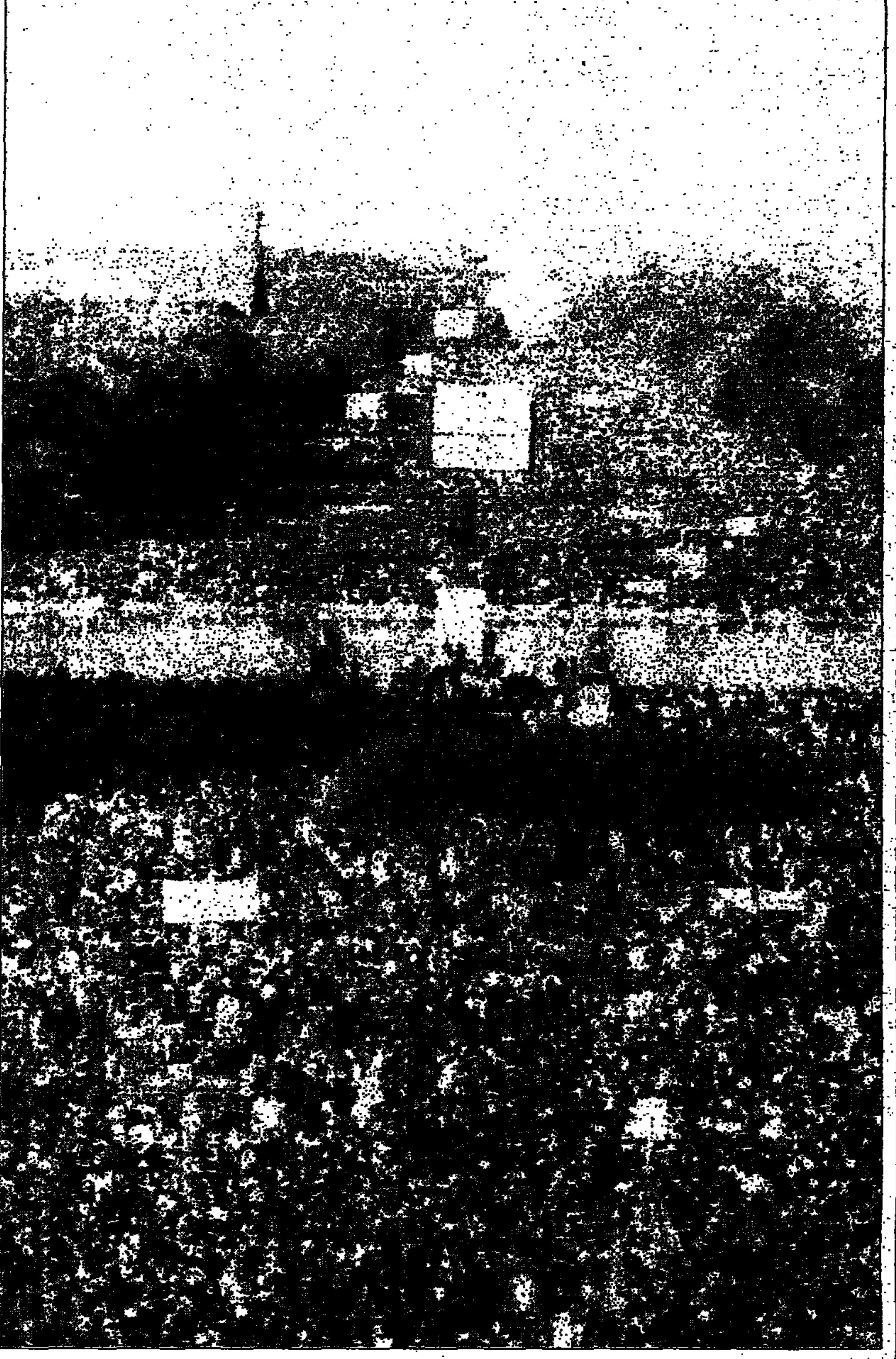
The Middle East imports 61 per cent of South African military exports and exports relatively cheap oil to Pretoria. South Africa imports 70 per cent of its oil needs from Kuwait and Iran. Early reports referred to divisions in the ranks of the Government of National Unity since Minister of Energy Pik Botha prefers increasing oil imports from Kuwait while Minister of Foreign Affairs Alfred Nzo of the ANC wishes to enhance cooperation with Iran, particularly after his visit to Tehran in October 1994. Iran and South Africa signed an agreement recently to store 10 million barrels of Iranian oil in Soldomba Valley in South Africa. South Africa is also considering importing Saudi oil.

Edited by **Gamal Nkrumah**









With Capitol Hill in the background, participants of the Million Man March expressed their indignation at the conditions of the Black man in America. The demonstrators collected money on Monday 16 October in Washington D C. The money collected will be used to defray the cost of the event and begin a Black economic development fund. The vast throngs of African-Americans echoed Nation of Islam leader Minister Louis Farrakhan (bottom left) in a series of pledges to improve themselves and forswear violence and drugs. In the wake of the O J Simpson saga, Farrakhan has emerged as the champion of the underdog and his movement is now widely seen as the vanguard of African American rights *(photos: AFP, AP and Reuters)*

Simpson versus Powell



By Mohamed Abdel-Moneim

The repercussions of the O J Simpson trial show how changing thought patterns can introduce new ways of looking at the world. Sometimes changing thought patterns are positive and sometimes they are negative. This trial rekindled the passions of old racial hatred in the United States. Many had incorrectly believed that racial tensions had subsided or that the ugly phenomenon had died down altogether.

All of a sudden Americans, and the American media, discovered that their country was composed of a "white" nation and a "black" one. These two often antithetical "nations" share the same geographical space. This is the same America which witnessed a bloody civil war fuelled by the race issue that rocks the country today. In modern times, the civil rights movement's leaders — the most famous of whom was Martin Luther King — galvanised the black masses in a brave bid to rid the country of endemic and institutionalised racism.

The intensive media coverage of the Simpson trial was a concrete example of how sensationalist and commercial media focuses on issues of race without giving a thought about the implications. The media made sure that ultimately the Simpson trial came down to racial questions.

When the verdict came, it was seen as a severe and critical judgement on American society and its future. Playing on traditional white-versus-black animosities and racial sensitivities, the media coverage contrasted the sharply different reactions to the verdict. It zoomed in on scenes of black jubilation on the night of Simpson's acquittal and highlighted how he partied with his lawyers, friends and family. The media also graphically showed how white America fumed by focusing on the shared sense of grief and outrage in the families of Nicole Brown and Ron Goldman. It was especially distressing to many white Americans to watch the tearful father and sister of Nicole at Ascension Cemetery where she was buried. The media disregarded all the dangerous repercussions.

One can foresee formidable changes in American society over the coming few years. Already a chain reaction has started. Last Monday we saw the Million Man March in downtown Washington D C. The march was initiated and led by Minister Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam movement. Minister Farrakhan has decried the American Jewish community in the past. He accused mainstream America of reverting to its old habit of regarding blacks as the enemy within. He expressed his grave concern about mainstream America's classification of blacks as fifth columnists. "History has shown us what happens to all of America's enemies," he said.

Ironically, just before the Simpson trial it was widely believed that General Colin Powell would become America's first black president. Powell is the acceptable face of black America. He has had a brilliant career in the army and enjoys the trust of white America. It is still too early to assess the full impact of the Simpson trial on his chances of assuming the presidency of such a powerful nation. It has even been reported that Colin Powell is a descendant of the British king, Edward the First and is supposed to be related to the founding father of the American nation, George Washington, and to former Presidents Thomas Jefferson and George Bush. Even such an impressive lineage is not likely to help Powell's chances in the White House now. The harm done by the Simpson trial to race relations in the US, and consequently to Powell, may be irreparable.

The writer is the managing editor of Al-Ahram.

Counting on telecommunications

Few industries are today in greater flux than telecommunications and it is the developing countries of the Third World that bear the brunt of rapid change, reports **Gamil Ibrahim** from Geneva

The rich and the poor spoke in two different languages about the communications revolution at the strategies summit which took place in Geneva on 3-11 October. The Seventh World Telecommunication Exhibition, Telecom '95, was organised by the International Telecommunication Union.

The rich are concerned with the information revolution and how to organise the "global village". The representatives of the poor were concerned with the deteriorating economic conditions in their countries, which entail their exclusion from the worldwide web of telecommunications and effectively keep them out of the global village.

According to a recent study, *Telecommunication and Economic Development*, published by John Hopkins University Press, "Developing countries have 75 per cent of the world's population and 16 per cent of its product, but only 12 per cent of its telephone lines."

The fact that two-thirds of all the world's people have never used a telephone is a sad truth. South African President Nelson Mandela, the star attraction at the international meeting, drew attention to the grim situation in the Third World. "If all the exhibitors took just 50 per cent of the money they're spending here in Geneva, you could set up a really good phone network in Africa," he said. Mandela warned, "In the 21st century, the capacity to communicate will almost certainly be a key human right."

The minister of transport and communications in Ghana, Edward Salia, made the point that, in sub-Saharan Africa, there were only about four telephones per 1,000 population. The lack of availability of funds in new investments to develop communications in developing countries is a serious problem. "Many developing countries face difficulties in raising capital for their existing operator," he stressed.

Germany, on the other hand, has managed to build an advanced telecommunications infrastructure throughout eastern and western Germany. Investments have totalled DM120 billion since 1989, explained Ron Sommer of Deutsche Telekom, the company that set up the network.

The minister of information and communications in South Korea, Kyung Sung Hyun, described his country's present position. "We are in the midst of the so-called information revolution. The world is moving from the traditional industrial society to the new information society," he said. "No one can imagine the world without telephones, computers, TVs and, to a lesser extent, the Internet."

In his study entitled *Building bridges to the future of communications*, John Harris says, "The convergence phenomena will increase the size of the worldwide market for information products and services from approximately $2 billion in 1995 to greater than $3 billion in 2000."A Canadian delegate described the size of this revolution. "In 1988, international voice and data traffic was 23 billion minutes. By 1993, this traffic had doubled to 47 billion minutes. By the year 2000, it is expected to double again to 100 billion minutes."

American Vice-President Al Gore coined the term "global information infrastructure" or GII for the network system that needs to be constructed for the information revolution. The GII would be made up of a mix of different industries involved in information, communications and other related fields.

Some participants from industry view the GII as more than a "network of networks" and maintain that the GII is a worldwide assembly of systems that integrate the following essential components: communication networks, such as telephone, cellular, cable and satellite networks; information equipment and appliances, including computers, televisions and telephones; information resources, including educational materials, medical databases, entertainment and commercial programmes; applications, such as telemedicine, electronic commerce and digital libraries, and people of all skill levels and educational and social backgrounds. This, the delegates concurred, would create the most overpowering cross-border link-up in the history of mankind and break the barriers between North and South.The role of the private sector in the industrially advanced countries has been most prominent in this context. Delegates affirmed that industry has not waited for government action on the GII and that already the GII has developed and deployed many domestic and transnational applications to support electronic mail systems, distance learning projects, commercial networks, interconnected libraries, medical facilities and service organisations. The deregulation of the world's telecommunication systems has serious international implications.

The private sector has created the GII technological base and, therefore, participants at the summit called for barriers to free information exchange to be removed. They emphasised that markets around the world had to be kept open to providers of basic and enhanced telecommunications services, within countries and across national borders.

It is noteworthy that the delegates from the industrialised world discussed in great detail these subjects as well as that of intellectual property rights and the need to change the current laws in developing nations. The West appeared to be most concerned that the brand names of the major telecommunication multinationals be protected. The topic of telecommunications is one of the thorny issues currently being discussed within the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and it has been decided that the results of these discussions will be shown on 30 April 1996 at the next ministerial conference.

Diplomatic sources have revealed that discussions on communications at the WTO have stumbled because industrialised nations are insisting on the need to apply the principle of reciprocity. Developing countries, however, are not able to compete with the rich world, which means opening up their markets. But, Japan was the only developed nation that offered better provisos for the developing world.

Fears have arisen that, come next April, developing countries will not have evolved a common stance to face Western pressure and that unfair conditions will be imposed upon them as happened in the Uruguay round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has organised several meetings for Third World representatives to discuss this matter in its different aspects. However, institutions dominated by the wealthy North like the WTO and the International Monetary Fund ordinarily do not take UNCTAD resolutions into consideration. Perhaps UNCTAD's new secretary-general, the Brazilian Rubens Ricupero, will give the organisation a new boost as a negotiating platform for developing countries in political issues.

Diplomatic circles in Geneva viewed the opinions which appeared at the strategies summit as tantamount to the official policy of the advanced countries on the information and communication revolution and see a battle between the haves and the have-nots as being imminent. Henrikas Yushkiavitshus of UNESCO asks, "Is the Internet the 21st century revolution? Others are fearful that telematics reinforces virtual reality more than reality, that it emphasises individualism and isolation from the rest of the world."

Landscapes yet to flourish

Germany's celebration of five years of unification was overshadowed by economic setbacks and social and political soul-searching, reports **Naglaa Ghali** from Berlin

"In five years time I see flourishing landscapes," said German Chancellor Helmut Kohl with a note of optimism upon unification in 3 October 1990. Five years have passed since then with no harvest on the horizon.

Today most Germans have come to realise that they have underestimated the high cost of unification and the sharp differences that existed between the two states. After 40 years of socialism, the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) was left in a dire state. Although considerable strides have been made since unification, East Germans still suffer from a tough adjustment programme with costs which, it is estimated, will be felt by a generation to come. The former East Germans still have to grapple with high rates of unemployment and the move towards de-industrialisation.

In East Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig and other major eastern cities construction work is going on around the clock as part of the modernisation process. In spite of the construction boom and the rise of a new service industry, the eastern half of Germany still suffers from a number of deep-rooted economic problems which did not disappear when the Berlin Wall came tumbling down.

"Construction maybe three times as much as in the west but the base of the economy is in a shambles right now," said Siegfried Schmidt, from the Berlin office of the Federal Ministry of Economics. "While figures indicate that the growth rate in the east is about 8.5 per cent compared to a little more than two per cent in the west, production in the east is only one half of the west," he added. In addition, several enterprises in the east serve only as production facilities for western manufacturers with no real investments in the areas of research and development. A trust company, the Treuhand Privatisation Agency, was established immediately after unification. Its strategy was to sell off quickly as many public enterprises as possible, rehabilitating more profitable industries while closing down others.

An estimated 14,000 enterprises have been successfully privatised since unification, but a great number of these are finding difficulties in marketing their products. In the past, two-thirds of former GDR goods were exported to eastern Europe. Exports to these countries have declined steadily.

"As latecomers to the international race, east German enterprises are having a hard time trying to get a share in world markets," said Schmidt. In the former East Germany the transfer to a market economy has resulted in its industrial base being eroded and an overall unemployment rate of 14 per cent.

Worse still, the average wage in the east is around 80 per cent of that of the west, commented Horst Ulrichs of the information office at the Senate of Berlin. "This is very hard for people to bear; that your salary depends on what part of the street you live in," he said, referring to the situation in the city of Berlin. In addition, top jobs in eastern parts have been occupied by officials from the west. "It is people in the west who decide and those in the east are the ones who become affected," he added. This has left many people feeling that what happened was not unification but a form of western annexation.

"At the beginning some west German officials acted like occupation officers," said Thilo Schelling, who was dispatched from the west to set up a new administration in the eastern state of Mecklenburg. "East Germans were made to believe that everything they worked for was incompatible and more than 1,000 west German laws were imposed on the east." In Schelling's opinion, these policies were not all prudent "as not everything in the east was bad and not everything in the west was successful".

This frustration in eastern parts has resulted in an increase in the number of supporters of the Party of Democratic Socialists (PDS), the former Communist Party of the GDR. "Today 34 per cent of east Germans support the PDS. These people are not communists but it is their way of saying they are not satisfied," said Schelling. In spite of numerous complaints in the east, people in the west see themselves as the real victims of unification. It is the west that finances development in eastern parts of the country, and an estimated 60 per cent of spending in eastern Germany comes as transfers from the west.

"Total amounts channelled to the former GDR amounted to DM1,000 billion during the period from 1990-94, representing an average of seven per cent of the combined annual gross national product," said Christian Kastrop, government director of fiscal policy issues in the Ministry of Finance. In order to meet its new obligations to the east, the federal government had to introduce the Solidarity Tax. All westerners have to pay a surcharge of 7.5 per cent of their taxable income, in addition to cuts in social expenditure. Shifting some public investments intended for the west to the east was also necessary. "About 15 per cent of federal government spending on unification was financed through tax measures, a third from revenues coming from the east. The rest was financed from savings, the redirection of funds and from borrowing," Kastrop explained. Echoing the current concerns in Germany as a whole, Kastrop acknowledged that German politicians and economists had "underestimated the magnitude of the problems thinking that they could achieve unification at a much lower expense".

Edited by **Gamal Nkrumah**





A question of political will

These days UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali does not readily grant interviews. But, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations, he spoke to **Mahmoud Qassem**, a former career diplomat of some 40 years standing and a former ambassador to several European and American states. The interview was conducted at the secretary-general's home in New York. He talked about the UN's current peace-keeping operations and touched on the difficulties inherent in trying to maintain world peace. Boutros Ghali has had to do battle with the mandarin-like bureaucracy of the UN. He also addressed the question of the UN's current near bankruptcy elaborating on how the organisation is now reduced to dipping into peace-keeping coffers



When you assumed office as secretary-general on 1 January 1992 you found an organisation shackled by a grave financial crisis and facing increasing demands for peace-keeping operations. How did you address the new situation?
Since the end of the Cold War, the world has witnessed radical changes in the international situation, but, so far, a new world order has not emerged. The world passed through a similar situation after World War II, since the features of the new world order did not take shape until 10 years after the end of the war with the establishment of NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

Attention is focused on the UN today. The view is that the organisation, which was ensnared for long years by the Cold War, has been released and should, therefore, be able to exercise its role in maintaining international peace and security and promoting social and economic development.

How have you been able to re-organise the UN's massive bureaucracy?
The day I took office, I declared that the days of the monopolisation of high-ranking posts were gone, and that efficiency and competence were the absolute criteria for recruitment, taking into consideration equitable geographical distribution as far as possible. I have initiated a reform programme for the UN's bureaucratic infrastructure.

However, taking into account that the three offices of the secretariat — in New York, Geneva and Vienna — comprise a total of 13,000 employees, it is difficult to eradicate bureaucracy.

Drawing on your experience as a professor of international law and political science, how would you describe the international relations between the North and the South?
The Charter of the United Nations, which was signed 50 years ago, states that all states are equal in rights and duties. The General Assembly, one of the principal bodies of the UN, is the forum in which all member-states are equally represented and in which each state has one vote regardless of whether it is a major or minor state.

However, in practical terms, we know that certain states have profound influence on international events and relations while others do not. This does not exclude the possibility that a small state or a state with little influence can play an effective and influential role within the UN, as Cuba and Yugoslavia did three decades ago.

When I came to office, I was already working on fostering the concept of democracy in international relations on the grounds that the UN was the only appropriate forum for the consolidation and promotion of this concept. Democracy is not only relevant to relations within states, but also to inter-state relations. I have recently presented a report to the 50th General Assembly concerning the role of the UN in promoting democracy within states through the provision of technical aid and selective assistance.

Is there a causal relationship between peace, on the one hand, and development and democracy, on the other? What are your views on dictatorships which have succeeded in their developmental aims?
There is a causal relationship between development, peace and democracy. Development cannot be realised in the absence of peace, security and stability. Democracy cannot take root nor flourish in an environment of turmoil, or under conditions of poverty, underdevelopment or unemployment.

Regarding the case you mentioned of the success of development in undemocratic societies, it may be that democracy is not a prerequisite for development. But there is no doubt that sustaining the development process in the long run is impossible in the absence of democracy.

Since you assumed your post, the organisation has become a hub of intense activity with numerous global economic, social and cultural conferences being held. When will the recommendations made at these conferences be realised?
Since 1992, and within the framework of preparations for the celebrations of its 50th anniversary, the UN held a series of international conferences to discuss international issues. The world today is confronted with global problems which necessitate global solutions.

Within this context, the Earth Summit was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 to examine the issues related to the protection of the environment vis-à-vis sustainable development. The Human Rights conference held in Vienna in 1993 issued the declaration of human civil rights, to promote political, economic, social and cultural rights. The conference also created the post of high commissioner for human rights.

The conference on population and development, held in Cairo in 1994, was a landmark on the road to promoting population policies consistent with social and economic development and focusing on the role of the individual in the progress and well-being of a society.

The international conference on social development, held in Copenhagen at the beginning of the year, reflected the concern of the international community, at the highest levels, for the issues of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. The participation of 118 heads of state and government in a conference, to discuss such vital issues, is indicative of the commitment being made.

Lastly, we witnessed the success of the recent women's conference held in Beijing, to discuss issues of development, progress, peace and women's affairs. The contribution of women to the success of any society and the realisation of its objectives in development and peace is essential.

The recommendations and programmes ensuing from those conferences are complementary to one another and constitute an overall international consensus regarding the programmes of action for the comprehensive development of mankind.

Why has the Agenda for Peace, presented to the Security Council on 17 June 1992, not received adequate attention from the world's major powers?
It is untrue that the Agenda for Peace has not received adequate attention. Since I presented this report in response to a request by the Security Council in January 1992, many member-states have shown interest, both at the level of the Security Council, which issued a number of statements concerning the concepts in the agenda, and the General Assembly, which established an open-ended working group to discuss proposals and ideas.

I have also presented an appendix to the Agenda for Peace, which has received substantial attention from member-states. They reacted by establishing a working group to study and develop a method for imposing and lifting sanctions on the basis of the concept discussed in the agenda.

The concept is that sanctions are not an end in themselves, and that the true victims of sanctions are the people who suffer the consequences of halted social and economic development.

How do you distinguish between "peace-keeping" and "peace-making"? Why has the UN been hesitant about transforming its peace-keeping operations to peace-making ones as has been the case in Somalia and in Bosnia?
There is some confusion between the role of the UN in peace-keeping and the concept of peace-making. The confusion may have been the cause of the current reactions to the developments in Bosnia-Herczegovina.

There is a basic difference between the UN operation in Somalia and the UN operation in Bosnia. In the case of Somalia, there was one superpower which showed concern and reacted to the situation by sending forces and other resources to implement the Security Council resolutions passed under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter.

In the case of Bosnia, despite the fact that Resolution 836 for the protection of the safe areas was approved under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter — in other words, the operation had to be implemented by the use of force — the UN forces were not supplied with the forces and equipment necessary for its implementation. A military force of 36,000 was needed to protect the safe areas, but only 800 were provided after lengthy talks with member-states which lasted for over three months. Worse still, the force was not properly armed.

On the matter of transforming peace-keeping into peace-making, I would like to explain that it depends on the Security Council not the secretariat or the secretary-general.

In my reports to the Security Council concerning the conditions in Bosnia, I have repeatedly explained that the council's resolutions are unimplementable under the present conditions, that the UN protection forces on the ground in Bosnia are insufficient and do not possess the requirements to execute the task.

In fact, the forces have been forced into a state of incapacitation, and forced to disobey and undermine resolutions because they could not execute their tasks without the necessary equipment.

Should protective diplomacy be used only to deter armed hostilities between parties in a dispute, or should it be used prior, during and after the conflict?
Protective diplomacy is one of the four pivotal concepts within the peace plan. The other three are peace-keeping, peace-making, and peace-building in the aftermath of conflicts.

Protective diplomacy aims at deterring the eruption of conflicts, or the escalation of disputes into armed conflicts. Protective diplomacy is, in fact, the most important diplomatic endeavour since it aims at alleviating tensions before the situation starts boiling over.

For protective diplomacy to succeed, specific procedures must be taken to build confidence between the parties, since mutual trust and good intentions are two basic conditions for the success of protective diplomacy.

The response of the Security Council to the request for the deployment of observers along the borders of Macedonia was an extremely positive step. The UN has prevented the expansion of the battlefield from former Yugoslavia to this state. Similarly, mediation efforts undertaken by the UN between Macedonia and Turkey to settle the disputes which erupted recently have led to a preliminary agreement for the normalisation of relations between the two states.

I would also like to add that protective diplomacy requires a high level of secrecy during the contacts conducted. Early warning efforts also require fact-finding in order to detect the areas where tensions are near explosion point. Lastly, protective diplomacy is not exercised in isolation from peace-keeping, peace-making and peace-building efforts. These concepts are all interrelated.

Despite financial difficulties, the UN has achieved successes in places such as El Salvador, Cambodia, Eritrea, South Africa, Mozambique and Angola. Why has the UN failed in Somalia and Bosnia?
The UN has indeed scored many successes despite its difficulties and scarce resources, although the media has not highlighted these achievements which have saved the peoples of those countries much bloodshed and suffering.

However, in all the cases in which the UN scored success, the political will of the parties involved to reach a peaceful solution was a common factor. The UN did not succeed in Somalia because the parties refused to put down their weapons. Consequently, despite the fact that the UN was in Somalia in implementation of Chapter Seven of the UN Charter, it was not able to impose a settlement on the warring factions.

The lack of political will and the high cost of the UN presence forced the Security Council to take the decision to pull out. While the UN failed to reach a peaceful settlement, it succeeded in saving thousands of Somali refugees from dying during the famine. The UN took responsibility for the care of refugees, accommodating them in bordering states.

In Bosnia, there are various reasons for the failure of the UN operation: the lack of political will from the negotiating parties and the major powers and the lack of a clear-cut policy on the conflict in former Yugoslavia. As a result, the UN has been made into a scapegoat. The UN was required to accomplish a "mission impossible" without an adequate mobilisation of resources and forces.

The UN did, however, undertake a number of operations to provide humanitarian and relief assistance to hundreds of thousands of Bosnians. In addition, accommodation facilities, food and clothing were supplied to over two million refugees. Previously, the UN had helped to keep the Republic of Bosnia-Herczegovina on the political map of the world as members of the UN.

In your annual report on UN activities, presented to the 50th General Assembly, you alluded to the UN's financial crisis. Could you elaborate on this?
The current financial crisis facing the UN is without precedent. The reason is the failure of many member-states to pay their approved subscriptions to the regular budget and to the peace-keeping budget. Arrears are estimated at nearly $3.4 billion, of which the US share is approximately $1.5 billion. Russia also owes a large sum, and over 60 other member-states have failed to pay their arrears.

Meanwhile, the cost of maintaining the UN has soared to unprecedented levels. There are 16 ongoing peace-keeping operations. I will give you one example of the situation: the operation in former Yugoslavia is costing the UN nearly $5 million a day.

In addition, some operations are unfeasible because of lack of resources. For example, when the peace agreement was reached recently in Liberia, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) requested the UN to provide financial assistance for the implementation of the agreement by sending UN observers to monitor the observance of the ceasefire. However, this is not possible at present due to the financial crisis; the entire operation in Liberia would cost $25 million or the amount the operation in former Yugoslavia requires every five days.

There is also another aspect. The deficit in the regular budget is balanced by borrowing from the peace-keeping budget. As a result, the UN has ceased to pay its debts to the member-states that contribute forces to the various UN operations. As a result, these states have withdrawn their forces.

I have lately tabled a proposal to the General Assembly whereby the secretary-general would be authorised to borrow from banks to finance the activities of the organisation. The collateral would be the debts of member-states, provided that the states would themselves pay the interest due. I hope that my proposal will be approved, and that member-states will promptly pay their arrears and their subscriptions on time, to support the UN as it stands at the threshold of another half century.

The above interview is syndicated by Al-Ahram Press Agency.

Skeletons in Andreotti's cupboard

If the charges against Italy's seven-time prime minister, Giulio Andreotti, prove true, real life will have far outstripped Hollywood. **Clare Pedrick**, writing from Rome, looks into the case file that has shaken the Italian political establishment

The accusations are so damning as to be almost beyond belief. Specifically, Andreotti will be accused of having used his position of power to fix trials to ensure that dangerous leaders of the Mafia criminal network walked free from court. He is also alleged to have ordered the murder of an Italian journalist about to expose his duplicity. Almost more incredible, the prosecution will describe how the Italian senator allegedly once met top Mafia overlord Salvatore "Toto" Riina while the latter was a fugitive in his native Sicily.

Abroad, Giulio Andreotti, 74, is probably Italy's best-known political figure, and his trial is bound to send shock waves throughout much of the international community. A man of immense prestige and influence, he has been prime minister on no fewer than seven occasions and occupied almost every cabinet post in a career spanning almost half a century.

This veteran statesman, known for his biting wit and razor-sharp brain, is on nodding terms with heads of state around the world. He has close ties with the Vatican and has been a friend of most of the recent popes. A devout Roman Catholic, he attends mass in Rome each morning.

So is it really possible that a man of Andreotti's character and calibre would be so foolish as to meet with a wanted Mafia boss and engage in effusive displays of friendship?

Top anti-Mafia magistrate Giancarlo Caselli claims the answer is yes, and he is ready to stake his career, and maybe his life on it. Caselli, a northerner who holds the difficult post of district attorney of the Mafia-ridden city of Palermo, has spent the past three years amassing evidence that he says will prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that Andreotti had close links with the Sicilian crime syndicate, which is one of the most powerful in Europe and has links with all major international crime networks.

The task Caselli has set himself is mammoth and potentially a dangerous one. If he fails, he risks losing his credibility as a professional. If he succeeds, he may be in grave danger. In July, a plot to assassinate him with a car bomb was discovered. In private, Caselli claims he "had no choice" but to proceed with the case against the most powerful political figure in post-war Italy.

For years, rumours have circulated about Andreotti's possibly nefarious connections, but nothing has ever been proved. The senator has survived 27 parliamentary inquiries into his activities and has always emerged unscathed. Only now, in the aftermath of Italy's so-called Tangentopoli (Kickback City) political corruption scandal, have the charges begun to stick. Andreotti was not personally implicated in the affair, which revealed endemic corruption in the ranks of major political groupings. But his Christian Democratic Party (DC), the bastion of every post-war government in Italy, was.

As well as Andreotti himself, the upcoming court case will be a trial of the entire Italian political system over the past 50 years and of the undoubted link that existed between political power and organised crime. For years, anti-Mafia crusader Judge Giovanni Falcone, who was assassinated by the Mafia in May 1992, claimed that the criminal organisation would only be defeated once ties were severed between it and the political figures who almost certainly protected it.

Now, with most of Italy's old political class either in disgrace or facing trial on corruption charges, the time may be ripe for even the dirtiest secrets to be swept out of the closet, say analysts. Professor Pino Arlacchi, one of the foremost experts on the Mafia, says the impact of the Tangentopoli corruption scam has been such that the public may now be ready to listen to allegations against Andreotti.

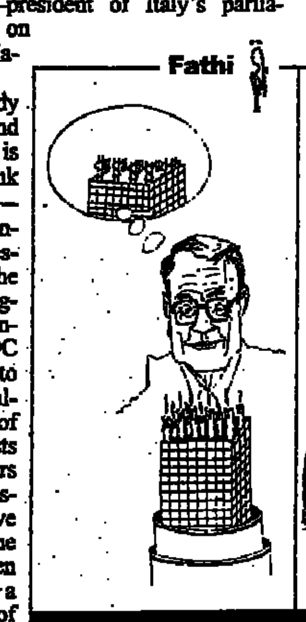
"The instances of blatant links that have been revealed by recent judicial inquiries between illicit groups and institutional powers have been so serious and so numerous that public opinion in Italy can no longer be surprised by anything," said Arlacchi, who is vice-president of Italy's parliamentary commission on the activities of the Mafia.

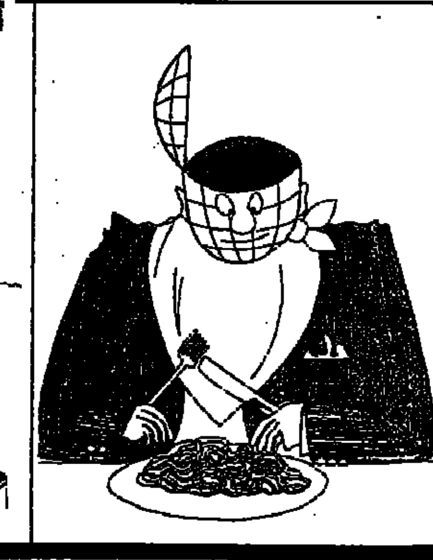
What has already been proven beyond any reasonable doubt is that a significant chunk of the CD in Sicily — the wing closest to Andreotti — had well established ties with the Mafia. Several key figures in the party, including former DC Mayor of Palermo Vito Ciancimino, have already been convicted of serving Mafia interests in exchange for favours from underworld bosses and for extensive electoral support. The CD which has been dominant in Italy as a whole since the end of World War II, has enjoyed massive support in Sicily, which it controlled with easy majorities.

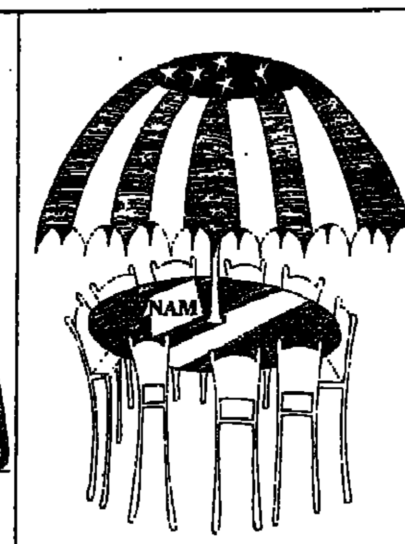
The prosecution in the Andreotti trial claims that Salvo Lima, a Sicilian DC figure close to Andreotti, acted as middleman between the criminal organisation and the powerful senator up in Rome. A parliamentary commission has ruled that Lima was definitely in cahoots with the Mafia, before being assassinated in Sicily in March 1992. His death, according to the inquiry, was almost certainly ordered by Mafia bosses as punishment for Lima's failure to ensure impunity for some top criminals. Lima's execution came just six weeks after an appeal court confirmed convictions against the crime bosses. Andreotti acknowledges his friendship with Lima, but claims he had no reason to suspect the Sicilian DC figure was anything to do with the Mafia.

Several prominent former Mafia members are however willing to testify that Andreotti was fully aware of Lima's underworld connections and that he used him as his go-between. Among them are veteran informer Buscetta, who has decided the time is right to spill his secrets, Francesco Marino Mannoia, who is the Mafia's former expert on narcotics processing, and Balduccio Di Maggio, who was driver to Mafia "boss of bosses" Toto Riina before he decided to reveal his chief's whereabouts to the police in January 1993.

Fathi







The testimony of these three "supergrasses" has helped District Attorney Caselli and his team assemble a 2,500-page report against Andreotti. In February, after a preliminary inquiry lasting two years, the prosecution squad scored a major victory when it convinced a court that there was a case to answer and that the former prime minister should be sent for trial.

Among the body of evidence gathered by the prosecution are some hair-raising allegations. According to Buscetta, it was Andreotti who ordered the killing of top investigative journalist Mino Pecorelli, whose body was found in March 1979 and whose murder has never been explained. Pecorelli had allegedly been ready to publish an article in the magazine he edited, *Osservatorio Politico* (Political Observer), which made dangerous claims about the role of Andreotti in the kidnapping a year earlier of his party chief who was then Prime Minister Aldo Moro.

Moro was taken hostage by the extreme left-wing Red Brigades in March 1978 and murdered two months later, after his CD failed to agree to negotiate with the terrorists and make concessions for his release. The accusation levelled by Buscetta, and espoused by the prosecution, is that Andreotti, the most senior DC politician involved in the affair, deliberately scuppered attempts to free Moro because he feared the hostage had begun to air suspicions about Andreotti's criminal links in the diary he had written while in captivity.

Buscetta claims the journalist's murder was commissioned by Ignazio and Nino Salvo, two Sicilian cousins with powerful Mafia connections, who allegedly arranged the killing as a favour to their friend Andreotti.

The Salvo cousins, and Andreotti's connection with them, emerge as linchpins in the case against the politician. Andreotti claims he never met them. But the prosecution says it has evidence that he was in close contact with these two figures, who wielded immense power in Sicilian criminal circles.

In the preliminary hearing, the court heard from several anti-Mafia magistrates who claimed that crime-fighter Giovanni Falcone had grave doubts about Andreotti before being murdered in 1992. One former colleague, Judge Mario Almerighi, described how perturbed Falcone had been when Andreotti, at the time prime minister, telephoned the anti-Mafia crusader to congratulate him on surviving a bomb attack on his vacation home in Sicily in June 1989. "Giovanni didn't openly say to me that Andreotti's phone call could be construed as a threat," said the magistrate in his deposition to the court. "But in the course of the conversation he did say that, if he were killed, we should make inquiries into the first person who arrived to place flowers on his coffin."

Andreotti's prestige as a life senator and former prime minister has spared him the indignity of having to go to the police station to be questioned. Magistrates have gone to the politician's office in Rome to put their questions to him, but the trial is likely to prove a harrowing experience.

The statesman has let it be known that the accusations have had a devastating effect on his wife Livia and their four children. He claims to be anxious to see the trial over and done with, so he can, as he puts it, witness his own "rehabilitation". "I don't know how long the trial will last, but I do know how it will end — with the truth emerging," he told reporters recently.

As he awaits the court case, Andreotti has spent time updating his meticulously kept diaries, and editing *30 Giorni* (30 days), a Roman Catholic magazine published in six languages which deals with religious and political topics. In recent months he has interviewed PLO leader Yasser Arafat and Libyan leader Muammar Al-Qaddafi for the magazine. Both are old friends of the former Italian prime minister, who during his long time in power was the architect of Italy's special relationship with the Arab world.

Whatever the outcome of the trial, Andreotti's political career is almost certainly over, and he can say goodbye to the once highly likely prospect of being nominated president of Italy, a prestigious role usually reserved for veteran statesmen. For a man who has spent all his working life in the political limelight, the eclipse now facing Andreotti may prove to be the hardest punishment of all.

(WNL)

Al-Ahram Weekly

Self-styled security

UN resolution 425, passed in 1978, called for Israeli withdrawal from Southern Lebanon. But seventeen years later, the Israeli occupation continues. Hezbollah's guerrilla war against Israeli forces in the so called security zone has not abated, and neither has Israel's intermittent, yet brutal, bombardment of villages, home to Lebanese Shi'a Muslim civilians.

The clear losers in the continuing battle are the innocent civilians who are bereft of security, stability and peace. This is notwithstanding the stream of refugees who fled north for safety. The villagers' daily lives are disrupted by the closures of shops and schools.

These Lebanese civilians and refugees are the forgotten casualties who have been sidelined in the conflict. And it is these same civilians who will become victims if Israel retaliates in a counterattack against Hezbollah's guerrillas, as it did in its July 1993 artillery shelling on the Bekaa Valley that claimed the lives of around 150 Lebanese civilians.

Israel's self-designated security zone has proved to be devoid of any semblance of security to the Israelis as well as the Lebanese. Over the past five days Hezbollah's latest offensive killed nine Israeli soldiers and wounded two in one of its toughest attacks against the Israeli occupation forces.

Any further escalation of the conflict in Southern Lebanon will only prolong the frozen Lebanese-Israeli track. It will also highlight the mutual mistrust between Israel and Syria, reflected in the deadlocked Syrian-Israeli peace negotiations. The declared mission of Hezbollah's militia is to free Southern Lebanon from the Israeli occupation forces. Nevertheless, Israel has blamed Syria for refusing to rein in Hezbollah. But will a silenced Hezbollah give Lebanon control over the South?

It is high time that the last active Arab-Israeli war front receives the attention of all parties concerned, as well as that of the international community.

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Ecology and ideology

Mohamed Sid-Ahmed questions whether cooperation in the face of ecological threats can become a stronger motivating force than ideological antagonisms

Public outrage is running high at the disclosure that Egyptian prisoners of war, some of them wounded, were killed in cold blood by their Israeli captors in the '56 and '67 wars. These crimes have now been revealed because a new generation of Israeli historians no longer feel bound to perpetuate the myth of a glorious history that their predecessors so assiduously built up around the Zionist state. Instead, they have gone public with the horrifying story of defenceless POWs killed because the Israeli army "did not know what to do with them" and wanted "to ensure they would not escape!" The Israeli officers responsible for the crimes have expressed no remorse; on the contrary, they justify their behaviour as legitimate and natural in the heat of battle.

Adding insult to injury, under the Israeli penal code, the perpetrators of these crimes are protected by the statute of limitations, and cannot be called to account. This is a travesty of justice by any standards, and particularly by the standards of Israel itself, which relentlessly tracks down former Nazis and prosecutes them for crimes committed against Jews more than 50 years ago.

Without going into the validity or otherwise of the contention that the murderers of Egyptian POW's are released from liability for their crime by the passage of time, while those of Jews remain accountable forever, Israel's application of such a brazen double standard has provoked deep resentment among Egyptians, who are coming to realise that the peace process they spearheaded has not brought an end to reasons of hatred and enmity, which are deeply rooted in the ideological beliefs of the two sides.

In the final analysis, ideology is a view of the world which can never be entirely objective, if only because it is a function of the relative position of the viewer. Ideology does not deal with abstract objective realities, but with the subjective perception of those realities. Thus it colours and interprets events to fit in with its own world view, which is in turn formulated to a very great extent according to the subjective position of its adherents.

Ideology is closely linked to reasons of conflict between people, that is, between thinking beings capable of reasoning and exercising free will. Ecology, on the other hand, treats of the interaction between humans and their natural environment, that is, between thinking beings and the unthinking forces of Nature. This makes the game played according to the rules of ideology, where both sides enjoy the faculties of intelligence and discretion, very different from the one played according to the rules of ecology, where only one of the players disposes of these faculties.

If we place the relationship between the Arabs and Israel in an ecological framework, which takes into account such factors as water shortages, pollution, etc. then it becomes necessary to inject an element of rationality in the modalities of discourse between the two sides. This is the subject of my book, *Peace or Mirage?*, which postulates that the only issue on which Arabs and Israelis can see eye to eye is not democracy or the market, but the coming water crisis. The issue of water is governed in the final analysis by ecology, by the relationship between all the inhabitants of the region on one side and Nature on the other. It cannot be made a function of the relations between the parties to the Middle East conflict, which remain strained despite a spate of peace agreements. Deep-rooted reasons of conflict between the different communities in the region can only be overcome if scarcity is replaced by abundance, a condition that will come about not only by ensuring a fair distribution of land, but by finding a way of greening the vast deserts of the Middle East.

Before a project of this magnitude can get off the ground, two main hurdles must be crossed: discovering a new and renewable source of cheap water and, before that, building up a regional consensus on the need for such a project. The second hurdle is, in many ways, more difficult than the first, because, even if politicians and decision-makers manage to put aside immediate reasons of hostility in favour of the long-term survival of the region, such an abstract notion is unlikely to convince the masses, especially when reasons of hostility are aggravated, as is now the case with the disclosure of the massacre of Egyptian POW's by the Israeli army. Thus the dynamics of ideology, which necessarily addresses the emotions, come up against the requirements of ecology, which is governed by objective reality.

This dilemma is a very modern one, because until recently the scope of politics was confined to man's relations with man, to the management of conflicts — national, social, class, etc. — that arose between different societies, as well as within each individual society. Only when technology advanced to the point where it could threaten the natural habitat of the entire human race was it considered necessary to extend the scope of politics to encompass conflict-situations arising in the symbiotic relationship between man and nature.

In a report issued by the think-tank he has headed since he became a private citizen, Gorbachev brought up the same idea raised in my book, albeit from a different angle. Stressing the importance of the ecological dimension, he notes that the main contradiction of our time is no longer between two world blocs espousing antipodal ideologies, but between *homos technologious* and nature. In my book, I try to extrapolate to the regional level the global problematic put forward by Gorbachev. Still, the dilemma is how to subordinate human emotions to abstract rational thinking, especially that ordinary citizens do not have access to all the necessary information and it is the masses, not the elites alone, who decide the course of history. While emotions are not necessarily rational, they reflect our innermost selves, and it would be wrong to dismiss them as necessarily inferior to rational thinking. Moreover, what can appear rational could very well contain logical flaws. On the other hand, the ecological threat is a reality beyond our will and cannot be avoided while emotional storms can be weathered through political action.

A case in point is the crisis of the Egyptian POW's murdered by the Israelis. If Israeli politicians do not take the necessary political action now to weather the emotional storm provoked by this crisis, not only by issuing an official apology to Egypt (like Japan recently did to Britain for much less, namely, for ill-treating, not murdering, British POW's during WWII), but also by lifting the prescription period for such crimes and bringing the perpetrators to justice, the conditions necessary to face ecological imperatives will not be met, to the detriment of all concerned.

Between reality and rhetoric

Hassan Abu Taleb analyses the inconsistencies that riddle Libya's position towards the peace process and its recent decision to expel Palestinians

Whatever the outcome of the crisis created by Libya's expulsion of Palestinians the act itself raises a number of issues of both an ethical and political nature. First and foremost, it raises questions over the right of any Arab party to act in such an unprecedented manner. Under the guise of a flamboyant nationalism Libya has exposed the Palestinians to hardships and sufferings they did not deserve.

Arab countries, including Libya, by accepting a peaceful, negotiated approach to the Palestinian problem, implied their acceptance of three principles. The first of these is that the party most concerned with the problem, i.e. the Palestinians themselves, through the Palestine Liberation Organisation, is solely responsible for the negotiations. The second principle is that Arab nations remain committed to supporting the Palestinians throughout the negotiating period that will lead to the gradual emergence of peace. So by accepting a negotiated settlement Arab countries committed themselves to a third principle, that of a gradually emerging peace.

All Arab countries, including Libya, are entitled to express their positions on the Arab-Israeli negotiations that led to the Oslo and Taba accords. Some Arab countries may feel that the negotiations have twisted the concept of a peaceful and comprehensive settlement and that the Palestinians have compromised too many rights, including the right to establish an independent Palestinian state. Any country, then, can register objections to the results of the peace process.

Yet it becomes problematic when a country decides to register its objections by interrupting the peace process. Surely it would be less futile to register such objections by lending support to the Palestinians, thereby strengthening their negotiating position.

The manner in which Libya chose to register its objections raises a serious question: to what extent should a state be allowed to use Palestinians working within its borders to express its own dissatisfaction with the outcome of the peace process? The Libyan action strikes an ironic, nationalist note. Under eye-catching banners demanding "the right to return", greater suffering is forced on the Palestinians by the government of their host country. Contracts are cancelled. Palestinians are subjected to a host of direct and indirect pressures, often whipped up by the media. They become pawns in a game that is not of their making and that they do not want to play. They serve as a tool, a scapegoat, for problems, such as those emanating from the Lockerbie bombing, over which they have no control and in which they had no involvement. Palestinians, in such instances, become little more than negotiating cards, to be played and discarded according to others' whims.

Official Libyan statements, most importantly the statement by Gaddafi delivered in *Al-Mukhayyam* on 9 October, have registered protests against the agreement concluded in Washington. Such protests have been grounded in the argument that the agreement makes no provision for the return of large numbers of Palestinians. Libya has drawn attention to the many headline grabbing statements insisting that the Palestinian problem has been solved, and from such statements has decided to conclude that there is, if they are taken at face value, no earthly reason why Palestinians should not return to their homeland which has, apparently, now been liberated.

Libyan statements have been both disingenuous and flamboyant. Palestinians living in the camps set up on the Egyptian-Libyan borders said that they had little choice but to leave their jobs. Nor had they been duly indemnified. Most of them had lived in Libya for two or three decades as law abiding citizens.

Now while Libya is fully entitled to reject or approve any situation, at a national or Arab level, according to the dictates of its own convictions, to cloak its rejection of the accords in such actions, taken against Palestinians, is unacceptable.

If the cloud can be said to have a silver lining — which, admittedly, can be of little solace to those Palestinians camped at the border — it is that Libya's actions have drawn attention to the Palestinians' right to return. This is an issue being addressed both on the Palestinian-Israeli track and in multilateral negotiations at the regional level. It is, furthermore, an issue fraught with complexities.

Negotiations assume that the right of return will be effected over a phased period, a staggering that serves both practical and political ends. Thorny and complex issues, as the ongoing peace process has clearly illustrated, can only be addressed through lengthy and convoluted negotiations. Emotional gestures, a lack of deliberation, can all too easily lead to more suffering of the kind exemplified by life today in the camps that are strung along the Libyan-Egyptian border.

The Libyan political arena has always resounded to high-sounding nationalistic slogans which have generally been followed by contradictory actions. Under the banner of Arab nationalism, it has made moves towards Malta, a non-Arab country, and invaded the northern region of Chad. It sought to establish an Arab-African federation with Morocco, which it abruptly abandoned 18 months ago in protest at Moroccan relations with Israel. Libya, while hoisting high the banner of Arab nationalism, has consistently dealt blows to Arab unity, confirming the impression that Libya's policy makers are increasingly unable to distinguish between reality and rhetoric. How else can we explain Libya's treatment of those Palestinians who gave so much to the development of the modern state?

Politics requires a degree of flexibility. It is unwise to persist in heightening tensions without justification. These two statements are self-evident. The flexibility which Libya must now display requires that it abandon its measures to expel Palestinians, that it extends hospitality to them and, until practical procedures for repatriation are agreed on, that it offers the Palestinian negotiators support rather than harassing them.

The writer is an expert at the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies.

A responsible opposition

By Naguib Mahfouz

Opposition is not just a question of automatically disapproving of everything the government does simply because it is the government. Nor is opposition to be confused with the kind of random incitement that is apparent in certain sections of the press.

Newspapers can afford to issue blanket criticisms of, say, the government's budget proposals. Such criticisms are less appropriate in the mouth of a member of the parliamentary finance committee. He cannot, after all, afford the luxury of out and out condemnation. Instead, he must present an alternative to the government's proposals. What, after all, is the use of an opposition party in parliament if it cannot present alternatives?

The opposition may publicise its disapproval of government actions in the press through issuing a barrage of criticism. But in parliament it is necessary that the opposition cooperate in hammering out solutions to the many pressing problems that afflict the nation.

The basis of democracy is that responsibility is shared by those in power and those out of power. In our case non-democratic procedures have been around for so long that the government acts as though the country is its own fief, whilst the opposition attacks the government as if it were a foreign power.

To escape such an impasse, I would entreat all political parties to participate in the electoral campaign, whatever their views or demands. Nothing should prevent their taking part in the elections, the only true doorway for participation in political life.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmawy.

The Press This Week

By Hassan Fouad

Gaddafi's theatre

THE NATIONAL and party press this week highlighted the forthcoming visit of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi to Egypt. On their front pages the papers underlined Foreign Minister Amr Moussa's statement, upon his return from Libya, that Gaddafi would halt a decision to expel 30,000 Palestinians from the Jamaheeriya.

In **Akhbar Al-Youm** Editor-in-Chief **Ibrahim Saada** wrote a front page article "Welcome to the Colonel" in which he said: "I do not think that the Egyptian people have attached so much importance to a visit by the Colonel to Egypt as they do to his forthcoming visit, the date of which has yet to be determined. It is an extraordinary visit preceded by grave events which only the Colonel can explain and clarify before Egyptian public opinion which has yet to understand them and remains stunned by their consequences."

After indicating that the expulsions included Egyptians and Sudanese he went on to say: "It is not enough that we should hear statements from the minister of information or the foreign minister upon their return from Tripoli to the effect that the crisis is over and the expulsion of Egyptians has been halted. Egyptian public opinion has tired of the humiliations to which Egyptians in Libya are subjected without justification. It is as though the Egyptians are fated to be 'punching bags' for this regime or that.

"I welcome the forthcoming visit of the Colonel in the hope that the Libyan leader will take this opportunity to address the Egyptian people and explain why Egyptians working in Libya are maltreated and the reasons for their mass expulsion along with Palestinians and Sudanese."

> *'I welcome the forthcoming visit of the Colonel in the hope that the Libyan leader will take this opportunity to explain why Egyptians working in Libya are maltreated and the reasons for their mass expulsion'*
> **Ibrahim Saada**

In **Al-Mussawar** magazine, the satirical writer **Mahmoud El-Saadani** dealt with the same issue in his weekly back page column. Under the title "Gaddafi, the Arab League and the Absurd" he wrote: "In his grand speech on the border, Gaddafi said that he was the prime lover of the Palestinian people and the only defender of their rights. Notwithstanding, Colonel Gaddafi ordered the expulsion of all Palestinians from Libya. These Palestinians did not enter Libya illegally — they did not infiltrate across the border — and have lived there for a quarter of a century becoming part of the Libyan people and have helped build Libya."

El-Saadani then goes on to say: "If the Arabs are concerned about the Arab League and its survival, I suggest that they have it attached to the Theatre Organisation, more specifically the section in charge of the Theatre of the Absurd. I would nominate one of two to head that section: actor Sayed Radi or actor Muammar Gaddafi, though personally I would choose Gaddafi, whom I think is the most appropriate person to lead the League in its new era."

> *'If the Arabs are concerned about the Arab League and its survival, I suggest that they have it attached to the Theatre Organisation, more specifically the section in charge of the Theatre of the Absurd'*
> **Mahmoud El-Saadani**

With the approach of the general elections the satirical writer **Ahmed Ragab** wrote in his front page column in **Akhbar Al-Youm** under the title "Who's money?" on the privileges of parliamentary deputies: "Privileges have expanded so that the People's Assembly now partially pays for pilgrimage and tourist trips and pays fully for medical treatment locally and abroad. This apart from the deputies enjoying parliamentary immunity. Ghandi was asked why he went about half naked. He replied that he represented a naked people. So how can we spoil the representatives of a poor nation and make them the envy of every opportunist?

"In ancient times a wise man from Sparta said: 'He who gives freely to another is surely giving him other people's money.'"

In his Sunday column in **Al-Ahram**, **Salama Ahmed Salama** wrote under the headline "A contract with Egypt": "We are in dire need of a new political contract with Egypt to be upheld by the majority party and the main opposition parties in order to hold clean, free elections which will express the aspirations of the people and come close to being the true representation of the political trends in existence.

"The period between opening the doors to formal nominations and holding the elections will be the test which will cause the voter either to proceed to the polling booth in all confidence and enthusiasm or abstain negatively as with previous elections."

Last Saturday was the 14th anniversary of President Hosni Mubarak's accession to the presidency. To mark the occasion **Al-Mussawar** produced a special issue with a large colour photograph of President Mubarak on the cover and a headline which read: "Mubarak in his 15th year: What he has achieved and the challenges of the future." The editor-in-chief, **Makram Mohamed Ahmed**, wrote a three-page article entitled "The 15th year of the Egyptian renaissance". In **October** magazine, Editor-in-Chief **Ragab El-Banna** wrote a three-page article entitled "October 1995 — a new crossing". The editors-in-chief of the three national papers wrote page one comments to mark the occasion.

On the 50th anniversary of the United Nations **Al-Gomhuria's** editor-in-chief, **Mahfouz El-Ansari** wrote a front page editorial article defending UN Secretary General Boutros Ghali. He said: "The West has attacked the secretary-general — his efficiency and independence, and has sought to replace him with someone who will do their bidding. Several nations of the South have also attacked him with envy in the hope of taking over the Boutros Ghali legacy and his exalted position.

"Unfortunately some Egyptian writers have joined in the attack on him accusing him of things for which he is not responsible. They blamed him for the Bosnian tragedy, the Somali debacle and the bloody chaos in Afghanistan. He was also blamed for events in Burundi and Rwanda."





Close up

Salama A. Salama

A French perspective

Paris tends to think of itself as the heart and brain of the European Union, and of Franco-German relations as the cornerstone of any future European structure. European revival, it is asserted, is dependent on Franco-German cooperation and in the absence of such cooperation Europe will not be able to assume a leading international role.

Since the collapse of the Soviet bloc the nations of eastern Europe have been racing one another to see which will be the first to return to the western fold. And the European Union, led by France and Germany, has been quick to realise the challenges that lie ahead in building a strong and united Europe, one capable of resisting both US hegemony and the potential threats posed by a resurgent nuclear Russia.

Current European policy, as influenced by France, has concentrated on determining the future role of Europe after the European Union has been enlarged to include a number of Eastern European nations, and following the planned introduction of a single European currency. Nor is it only economic policy that it is hoped to coordinate across Europe. Foreign policy too will become supranational, with Europe assuming a unified foreign policy. But for this to become a reality Europe must formulate a defence policy which, though operating within the Atlantic alliance, will in effect be independent of the US. America has, in any case, shown signs of wanting to disassociate itself from its responsibility to defend Europe.

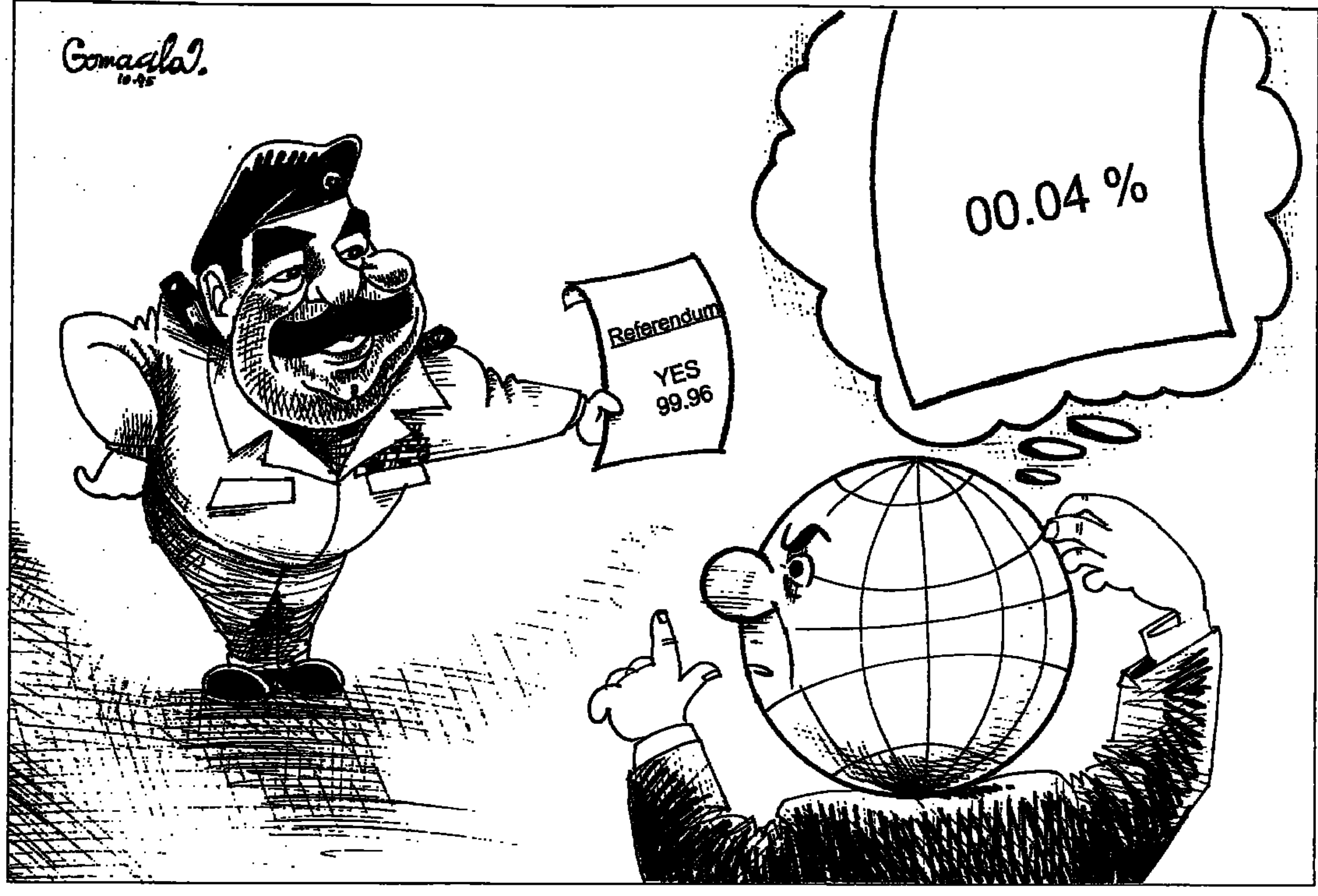
Viewed within this context President Chirac's stubborn refusal to abandon French nuclear tests in the face of an increasingly hostile international campaign begins to make sense. French politicians are convinced that nuclear power will remain a real deterrent in the international balance of power, and that the French nuclear umbrella must be capable of protecting Europe if the situation should demand it. It has also become increasingly clear that the objective behind the French tests is to develop the technology that would render such practical testing obsolete, allowing France to reach a similar position as the US, which relies on simulated rather than actual tests.

The situation in Bosnia, and the failure of Europe to contribute to its resolution has caused much despondency among French politicians, who were further discomfited by Washington's determination to grab all the prizes for solving the Bosnian crisis. That American firms are likely obtain all the building and reconstruction contracts in Bosnia must be doubly galling to a Europe that had to bear the military, political and material costs of the conflict. The French have announced that they are unwilling to see Bosnia turned into Kuwait, and that they refuse to become the financial backers of American plans for the Balkans. The race between large European and American firms for the contracts to reconstruct former Yugoslavia has begun.

The motives that lie behind France's desire to bolster its relations with the Mediterranean states, forging strong and stable links between the Mediterranean North and the South and covering the whole range of political, economic, cultural and security issues are not hard to understand. France seeks to protect Europe's vital interests in this region and revive Europe's standing in the Middle East and North Africa.

French intentions become even more clear when we consider the agreement not to invite America and Russia — even as observers — to the Barcelona Conference of Mediterranean States scheduled for November.

Nor is France alone in holding this position, since it is shared by many other founder members of the European Union. The future will hold many obstacles. The success of the European Union, however, will be measured by its ability to turn the Maastricht Agreement into a reality. Maastricht will remain the true foundation of the European structure well into the 21st century.



Soapbox

Processing peace

It would seem that Israel is more interested in the peace process than in peace itself, preferring the complexities of procedural intricacy than direct negotiations addressing all outstanding issues.

Perhaps it would be more precise to say that as far as Israel is concerned, peace has already been achieved since Israel seems adamant on confusing the peace process with peace itself.

If one were to date the beginnings of the process to Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977 it has already lasted 18 years. True, important events have occurred during this period including a final peace treaty with Egypt, then one with Jordan and phased agreements with the PLO. But the end of the road — i.e. a comprehensive peace — is still a very long way away. On the Palestinian track the most complex issues have been postponed. The Syrian-Lebanese track remains closed.

Experience holds out little hope for the speedy conclusion of peace. If Israel's handling of the Palestinian issue is anything to go by, then resolving all the remaining issues will take a couple of decades at least. At this rate a comprehensive peace, if it is to be achieved at all, will take a quarter of a century.

Israel has based its negotiating strategy on the premise that time works in its favour and that the peace process, with the passage of time, would erode the Arab system and weaken the Arab states' negotiating position, obliging them to make ever more concessions. Unfortunately, events of the last 25 years confirm Israel's hypothesis. If the Arabs continue in their present state of disarray, one can foresee an ever greater number of Arab concessions to Israel. But does this make "peace", even the peace envisioned by Israel, likely let alone permanent?

The answer is by no means certain.



This week's Soapbox speaker is a professor of political science at Cairo University.

Hassan Nafaa

The same old story

Ibrahim Nafie argues that since its inception the Iranian revolution has not once disavowed its intention to export itself

Is it wrong to accuse Iran of having attempted to extend its power by exporting its revolution? Did the Egyptian press intentionally distort the facts, harming Arab-Iranian relations to such an extent that the Arab world lost the strategic depth lent by Iran, as my colleague Fahmi Howeidi has suggested. Were calls for the export of the Iranian revolution no more than the expression of individual opinions by particular officials, voiced during momentary exultation over the success of the Iranian revolution, as he claimed in a paper delivered at the seminar "On Arab-Iranian Relations: Current and Future Trends", convened by the Centre for Arab Unity in Doha?

A cursory glance at Iranian foreign policy since 1979 confirms that this is not the case. On the contrary, its foreign policy has been underwritten by the desire to export its own revolution not just to neighbouring countries but throughout the Islamic world. Iran has systematically attempted to force its neighbours to adopt the Iranian model of government, through intervening in their internal affairs and actively supporting terrorist and rejectionist elements with money, arms and ideology. Khomeini himself, in his book, *Islamic Government* (page 36), wrote that the Iranian revolution had a leading role to play in liberating Islamic people from what he termed the domination of colonialists and their proxy governments by establishing just Islamic government. Similarly, in a Friday sermon repeatedly delivered in the Great Tehran Mosque between January 1979 and June 1980 and published by the Iranian Ministry for Islamic Guidance, Khomeini's successor, Ali Khamenei said: "We are asked, 'Why do you export your revolution?' And we answer that it is our responsibility to guide mankind.' In a speech to members of the Iranian diplomatic corps, broadcast on radio Tehran on 6 March 1984, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Vilayati said: "Our calling, first and foremost, is to bring the message of Islam and the Islamic revolution to the world." Hussein Mussavi, a prominent figure in the Iranian regime through most of the eighties, was more succinct when he said, as broadcast on radio Tehran on 5 April 1984 that "the objective of the Islamic revolution is to change and transform mankind. We must offer to the oppressed people of the world the correct standards of Islamic culture. It is therefore the duty of our cultural attachés to export the Islamic cultural revolution."

Numerous other statements by Iranian officials demonstrate that the call to export the Islamic revolution was more than a sentiment pronounced in the first flush of victory. The export drive, moreover, was executed through various means, including the use of force. The revolutionary regime in Iran has continuously endeavoured to influence Islamist groups throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds. Iranian revolutionary literature consistently categorises the leaders of most Islamic nations as oppressors and constantly urges the overthrow of those governments which serve the interests of the "enemies of Islam". Since the Iranian revolution constitutes the sole model for an Islamic revolution, it must remain committed to supporting extremist radical Islamic movements in all quarters of the Islamic world. As such, exporting the Iranian revolution is more than a political objective; it is a religious duty. In this context, Iran conducts its foreign relations with peoples, not nations, and it becomes an imperative to offer them financial and military assistance, as well as military training and ideological indoctrination. Propaganda alone is not enough.

Of greater import to the conceptual framework behind exporting the revolution is the Iranian constitution. One of the aims of the Islamic Republic, according to the prologue, is "to strive, with other Islamic movements, to build the international Islamic nation and to save those suffering from privation throughout the world." The constitution confers upon the Revolutionary Guard and the Army of the Islamic Republic the task of fighting to extend the rule of the law of God to all quarters of the globe. Article 3 states that it is an objective of the Islamic Republic to give absolute support to the oppressed peoples of the world. Article 104 states that Iran is committed to working to establish true and just government throughout the world and to sustaining the legitimate struggle of the oppressed against their oppressors anywhere in the world.

Studies show that the Islamic Republican Party, which assumed control of Iran after the dismissal of Abul-Hassan Beni Sadr in June 1981 until it was itself dissolved in the wake of the Iran-Iraq war, was fully supportive of the notion of exporting the revolution. In fact some commentators have suggested that the core of the conflict between Beni Sadr and the party involved the controversy between Islam in the national perspective and Islam as an international movement. The Islamic Republican Party thought of itself as the party of Muslims throughout the world, not just in Iran. At the same time, the party's platform described the universality of the Islamic revolution and the export of Iran's revolution as two sides of the same coin. Thus, Iran used any number of international forums — the International Conference of Imams, Islamic Unity Week, the annual celebration of Jerusalem day, the Organisation of Ulema — to mobilise Islamic intellectuals, writers and clerics and to indoctrinate them with the Iranian concept of revolution. Iran also used two government organisations — the Permanent Committee for the Pilgrimage and the Office for the Islamic Call — to disseminate the ideas of the Iranian revolution and to extend Iranian influence abroad.

Although Iran has announced on several occasions that it will not intervene in the internal affairs of other countries and although its Ministry of Foreign Affairs is officially the agency that conducts foreign policy, several official, semi-official, and even more shadowy unofficial organisations in Iran are in contact with underground Islamist organisations in other Islamic countries. When Ali Hashemi Rafsanjani took over as president of the Republic in 1989, he said that he hoped to change many of Iran's policies with regard to exporting the revolution and supporting Islamic movements abroad. Yet, we find that Iran is still exerting considerable influence on the Islamist movements and promoting Islamic extremism in the area.

In Egypt, Iran certainly lends various forms of aid and support to groups that engage in terrorism in the name of religion. Its objective is to weaken Egypt's status in the region and its influence in the Gulf in particular. It is also trying to demonstrate that Iran has the ability to disrupt stability in the region and to overturn the system of government in Egypt. It has resorted to many means to achieve these aims. It has established relations with the terrorist movements in Afghanistan and Pakistan and strengthened its ties with the current regime in Sudan. Since the terrorist groups were first formed, Iran has given them financial assistance and has sent some of their members to Afghanistan for paramilitary training, on the pretext that they would fight alongside Afghan freedom fighters. All the evidence, including personal confessions, demonstrates that these terrorist group members received advanced training in the use of automatic weaponry and anti-tank and anti-aircraft machinery in special training camps located on the Pakistan-Afghan border. Iran has also used Sudan as a base to train terrorist elements as well as a base for the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. Between Iran, the Afghan resistance movements, Sudan and the terrorist groups in Egypt, Algeria and Yemen, Iran has created a strategic political axis to extend its influence in the region.

In spite of Rafsanjani's apparent moderation, recent developments in Algeria seem to show that Iran has remained consistent to its policy of exporting its revolution. For three years, Iran has been supporting the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in the violent confrontation that has beset the country. Its flagrant intervention in Algeria's internal affairs has brought about a steady deterioration in relations between the two countries. Since 1991 all attempts to normalise relations between Algeria and Iran have failed and in 1993 Algeria formally severed its relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Iranian intervention in Algeria's domestic affairs reached a peak in 1992. In July of that year, Ali Khamenei called upon Algerians to follow in Iran's footsteps and establish an Islamic republic. Moreover, it has been reported that Iran promised the FIS $3 billion once it assumed power, a clear indication that Iran wanted to impose its control and influence over Islamic groups in Algeria. When the preliminary parliamentary elections indicated widespread popular support for the FIS, Iran claimed the elections a major victory for Islam and the Islamic Republic and a stinging defeat for the US and Zionism. When the government annulled the election results, Iran accused Algeria's prime minister at the time, Ahmed Ghazali, of plotting a military coup in Algeria that would bring the country to the brink of civil war. The Iranian press waged such a brutal campaign against "the abortion of the Islamic electoral victory" in Algeria that Algeria withdrew its ambassador from Tehran. Escalating their campaign against Algeria, Iranian officials expressed delight at the assassination of Algerian president Mohamed Boudiaf, prompting angry reactions in Algeria at declarations that contravene both the norms of civilised behaviour and all religious principles and that, in effect, constituted, an exhortation to crime. Iran is also strongly suspected of being behind the explosion in Boumedienne airport on 26 August 1993 that resulted in many casualties. In other words, the more the goal of establishing an Islamic government in Algeria seemed to slip out of reach, the more drastic Iranian measures became.

The above demonstrates that exporting the revolution has continued to be an integral element of Iranian foreign policy since 1979. If there has been any change at all, it has not been in the policy objectives themselves, but rather it has been to reduce the ideological clamour that has cloaked the objectives, so as not to rouse the antipathies of the international community.

Of greater import, in light of the above, is Iran's armament policy. The fact that its armaments programme far exceeds the normal requirements for national self-defence is a further indication of Iran's expansionist intentions. One sees these intentions more explicitly in Iran's



very ambitious nuclear programme. Iran is currently in the process of constructing at least five nuclear reactors, under arrangements reached with Russia and China. Ostensibly the reactors are intended to supply the country's electricity requirements. However, this pretext is hardly convincing in light of the fact that Iran's enormous oil reserves should more than suffice to serve the country's energy requirements. That there is no apparent need for alternative energy resources increases one's suspicions that Iran's nuclear programme has ambitious military-strategic objectives. Suspicions are heightened when one learns that the Iranian-Russian nuclear cooperation programme comprises certain military components. Moreover, since the middle of last year, Iran has concluded contracts with China to complete the construction of four nuclear reactors within ten years. Initial estimates suggest that these contracts could permit Iran to possess nuclear weaponry within five years and that it could have ten centres for nuclear research within 20 years.

Iran's armaments programme looms ominous in light of the greater Iranian strategy aimed at usurping the place of major regional powers, not just in the Gulf, but throughout an area extending from northwest to central Asia. In augmenting its regional status, Iran is willing to use all available means — including exporting its revolution — and it has volunteered to fulfil a variety of functions in the Gulf and northwest Asia. In the Gulf and Islamic world in general, Iran has put itself forward as the bulwark for the defence of the Gulf. It has entered into a new phase of relations with the nations of the Gulf Cooperation Council, it has maintained a state of no war-no peace with Iraq, in spite of the enormous concessions Iraq offered to Iran during the Gulf crisis, and it is seeking to become the cornerstone of future security arrangements for the Gulf. According to the Iranian vision of such arrangements, Gulf countries would be prevented from seeking the intervention of any military forces from abroad under any pretext. A non-aggression pact would be concluded among all nations in the area and differences among them would be resolved through a regional court. Such proposals have so far succeeded only in arousing the anxieties of the Gulf states regarding regional security arrangements.

In north west Asia, Iran perceives an opportunity to extend its regional power by virtue of its cultural and religious links with the newly independent republics of central Asia and by virtue of its geo-strategic advantages as the link between the Middle East and central north western Asia. As a result, Iran envisions that it can serve as a counterweight to potential attempts to revive the Russian empire and as a power that can contain the mounting ethnic conflicts in the region. It also sees strong possibilities for economic cooperation with countries in the region, with all the opportunities this offers for promoting the Iranian political model.

Finally, according to officials in the Iranian Foreign Ministry, Iran might seek to implement a grander vision. Once it has achieved a formula for balance between itself and the countries of Central Asia to the north and a regional alliance to the south, whereby security of the Gulf would be restricted to the countries bordering the Gulf, both regions could be combined into a single regional bloc in the central sector of the Islamic world with Iran at its heart.

The most tangible evidence of Iran's expansionist designs occurred in April 1992, when Iran imposed full control over the island of Abu Mousa and seized the islands of Tanab Major and Tanab Minor. In spite of the fact that the northern half of Abu Mousa had enjoyed economic and political privileges by virtue of an agreement signed in 1971, the Iranian leadership believed that regional and international political circumstances at the beginning of this decade afforded them the opportunity to push their long range plans a step forward. Iran assumed full control over the northern half of the island and expelled its Arab inhabitants. Prior to this move, in May 1992, the Iranian armed forces conducted wide-scale military manoeuvres in the Gulf, revealing both the magnitude of the Iranian navy and the extent of the modern technology it now has at its disposal. In August of that year, the Iranian Foreign Ministry issued instructions to the effect that any ships arriving at Abu Mousa must first obtain the necessary permission to enter the island's regional waters and that "foreigners" must obtain prior entry permits from the appropriate Iranian authorities. The following September, reliable information confirmed that Iran had installed Silkworm missiles on the island and linked these with their missile network along the Iranian coast of the Gulf. These actions were accompanied by official proclamations of Iranian sovereignty over Abu Mousa and cautions to the Gulf countries against supporting the claims of the United Arab Emirates.

It is thus amply clear that Iran, in its dealings with the Arab World, has more consistently worked to augment discord and sharpen tensions than it has striven to strengthen the bonds of cooperation. It does not seek dialogue and understanding as much as it seeks to dominate and contain. Therefore, discussion of Iranian expansionist policy is not so much an affront to the Iranian regime as it is an analysis of the potential dangers of Iran's military and political enterprise. This in turn is the natural first step towards devising the appropriate mechanisms with which to confront that enterprise, and the only possible formula is to formulate mutual Arab defence pacts and to combine our collective efforts to acquire the capacity to resist Iranian expansionist designs before they become too difficult to contain.

Who then is responsible for the deterioration in Arab-Iranian relations? Can the Arab media, and particularly the Egyptian press, be held accountable for Iran's undisguised strategy aiming at regional domination, and its policy of exporting violence to the Arab World? How can we hope to keep Iran as a potential ally of the Arab World as long as Iran does not alter its political ambitions, so that a spirit of cooperation can supplant animosity? Finally, what purpose does it serve in this context to heap accusations against Egypt and the Egyptian and the Arab press and to absolve Iran of all blame and censure?

Reflections By Hani Shukrallah

A more human man

Two months ago my father, Ibrahim Shukrallah, went into a coma from which he did not awaken. Around midnight on 28 September, having returned home after several weeks in hospital that same day, he finally gave up the struggle with death lasting more than two and a half years.

For 32 months, one of the most dynamic and vital men I have ever known was forced to inactivity and silence. A stroke took away all movement from the left side of his body, but most horrible of all, it took away his speech, and with it, his ability to read and write. The doctors called it "global aphasia", but beyond the mumbo jumbo that seems to account for a great part of modern medicine, the term apparently denoted little, if anything at all, beyond what was easily observable.

He continued to recognise his family and friends, his face would light up when an old and dear friend came to see him. He laughed heartily at the antics of his grandchildren. But how much did his fits of crying, the countless hours of depressed silence, denote a realisation of the extent of his captivity?

I would like to believe that people can sometimes exercise a measure of control over their ultimate meeting with death. And in the case of my father, I would like to believe that for two and a half years he held on, bore the enormous suffering, as an act of love — for his wife, children, grandchildren. By the time he went into his final, and unexplained, coma, he could bear no more, even for love — no one could.

He died on the night of 28 September — the same day on which Gamal Abdel-Nasser died 25 years before, and on which, in 1961, Egyptian-Syrian unity collapsed. A day of failed dreams. It was also the day he came back home after a month and a half of hospitalisation — a day that was exceptionally free of the respiratory crises that were a feature of his weeks in hospital, and which always brought doctors and nurses scurrying to his bedside, with their well-intentioned but horrifyingly intrusive equipment and "life-saving" interventions. He spent an especially calm day at home. Close to midnight, he fell into what initially seemed a deep sleep. Without crisis, without fighting for breath, he just stopped breathing.

His poetry has already earned him a claim to posterity. How much of a claim is yet to be determined. Literary acclaim came very late — a special issue of *Al-Qahira* literary magazine on his poetry and other literary work came out after his stroke. And other recognition has been forthcoming since his death. His production was too sparse, his poetic vision possibly too revolutionary, and it remains to be seen how much of a stamp he will ultimately leave on Arabic poetry.

All this I leave to his fellow poets and critics to settle. Save for lay appreciation, my father's literary talents unfortunately passed this generation of his offspring completely by. My concern here is not with his current or future claims to renown, but with qualities and values that were rare in his time, and are becoming virtually extinct in ours. In my forty-five years I have known very few persons who were as alive as my father, yet today's obsession with closed and exclusivist cultural and ethnic identities makes of him a virtual chimera — disavows him more than actual death ever could.

He did live however — a very tangible and a very full life. And the fact of his having lived is testimony to the pernicious fallacies of the bulk of today's conventional wisdom. A multiplicity of 'identities' and cultures sat comfortably within him, with never a sense of his having to conform to one at the expense of the others.

Born in 'respectable poverty' into an Alexandrine Coptic family on a one of the lower rungs of the middle class ladder, he was very much the urban Egyptian — the *ibn el-balad*. He loved colloquial Egyptian and, in 1956, wrote an article celebrating its, then recent, admission, mainly at Salah Jahin's hands, as a 'proper' language of poetry. His wit and sense of irony were equally a testimony to this aspect of his heritage.

Yet a very strong sense of his Egyptianess did not conflict with a lifelong commitment to pan-Arabism, to the dream of Arab liberation and unity. It was the Palestinian cause — which he embraced with encyclopedic knowledge of Palestinian history and a passionate empathy with the Palestinian people — that was the focus of his pan-Arabism, however. And it was the Palestinian cause that provided the purpose and direction for his career in the Arab League. One of the founders of the Arab League Secretariat, he was nevertheless not a little cynical about the organisation and the regimes that comprise it. It was, however, a platform which could be used to defend and advocate the cause of the Palestinian people, and to this he devoted the best part of his life. Camp David came upon us; the Arab League split, one part in Tunis and an Egyptian skeleton in Cairo; and he left.

He never lectured or tried to indoctrinate his children. Save for a mutually embarrassing occasion on which he tried to explain to me the proverbial 'facts of life' — an explanation which, as is usually the case, came somewhat late — I do not recall him ever lecturing me, or my brother and sister, on any subject. Nevertheless, we were, and remain, a uniquely like-minded family.

One of his most amazing qualities was a phenomenal reading speed, and he used it to the full. He read interminably, and always seemed to sweep through books. At a time when it is becoming increasingly rare to find an Arab who speaks and writes classical Arabic well, his mastery of both Arabic and English seems doubly amazing. He wrote beautifully in the two languages, and was an outstanding public speaker and orator in both. He hated ornamentation and pretense however, and spoke classical Arabic with an Egyptian inflection, and the accentless English of the non-native speaker.

He took pride in his Coptic heritage, yet he studied Islam more deeply and thoroughly than any of today's self-styled pronouncers of *kufr* could ever dream of doing — writing an extensive study on the Sufi tradition. As head of mission to India, he often attended Indian Muslim functions, never hesitating to join his hosts in communal prayer. He was fiercely anti-imperialist, yet he loved English language and literature with a rare passion. He was committed to the Palestinian cause, yet one of his first acts whenever he took over an Arab League mission abroad was to show the door to the anti-Semitic and neo-Nazi hangers-on that some other Arab officials used to consider allies.

Within him one could find the influences of Jesus and Mohamed, as of Marx and Freud; images from a *Thousand and One Nights* and the *Sira* of Abu Zeid Al-Hilali mingled with those from the Hindu *Mahabharata* and the *Canterbury Tales*; Shakespeare and Elliot found pride of place alongside Al-Nafazawi and Taha Hussein.

A multiplicity of 'identities' and cultures sat comfortably within him, not fully synthesised perhaps, but for all this, he was a better, a richer, a more human man.



SWISS ballet company Movers, under the artistic direction of Bruno Steiner, have built up an enviable reputation for movement theatre. On their first visit to Egypt the group will perform a new piece, *Pianta Rei*, at Cairo Opera House, combining elements of dance, acrobatics and pantomime. For details see Listings

Going to battle

David Blake jostles through the after dinner crowd

European Community Chamber Orchestra: Cairo Opera House: Main Hall, 10 October

Been everywhere. Played everything. Done it all. festooned with credentials from the great in all the most exalted musical places. It is hard to look and harder to listen to the European Community Chamber Orchestra without falling for them.

So fall — and enjoy. We did. But the pleasure-principle always has a sting in the tail. You've had your pleasure, now pay for it. As usual, the hook came at the end. What had the concert been about? It is difficult to say no when yes is more than enough. The big audience said yes. But in spite of the haute cuisine and high dressing something was missing at this high-toned reception.

The surface of every piece played was shiny — brightly coloured and giving maximum dazzle to individual players. It was all unimpeachable. And then comes another hook. What did go wrong with this meringue?

Well, the whole effect was retro after dinner soft surface stuff. The concert comprised five offerings and each was given the same spray finish. The music had no variety or tautness. The dressing was fine but maybe they left the body behind.

The Weber Quintet for clarinet was the bright light of the evening. Joan Enric Lluna floated his instrument like a bel canto voice over the bright, fresh orchestration of Weber. Lluna is a hero from the Wigmore Hall concerts, London. The bird sounds and shading effects so difficult on the clarinet gave delight. And it ended in a chase through a green summer forest.

Does anyone know what Grieg really thought of his *Holberg Suite, op 40*? Nothing much shows but discomfort and this was not one of Grieg's failings. The melodies are neither clearly stated nor expressive of the melancholy lightness that is one of Grieg's hallmarks. He is never lumpen but the Holberg is heavy meatball, certainly not the fault of the European Community Chamber Orchestra. Perhaps played in another context it would not have sounded so padded and stuffy.

Wolfgang Schroder is a mercurial violinist-conductor. He leads, encourages, feels and produces results. The response he had from the orchestra was electric. Doubly disappointing then that they had a programme that was so salon. Where were some of the sharp, defined visions of the 20th century available to Schroder and his forces? Even when they got to the exciting 20th century of Bartok, it was given a heavy coat of hairspray. No shadows were invited to this party.

Amira Selim, soprano, Tamer Tewfik, tenor, with Irina Tchaklina, piano; Arts Centre, Zamalek

A concert far from the mainstream. To find two young singers, Amira Selim, a light soprano, and Tamer Tewfik, a light tenor, sharing the same concert with not a note by Mozart in sight was a shock, albeit a pleasant one. Sometimes to be spared the routine run through the stock operas of Amadeus is a joy.

The staircase hallway of the Arts Centre, Zamalek, is rather crushed for a vocal concert. The acoustics are awful. Irina Tchaklina was unable to accompany. The notes flew back to the keyboard causing piano clatter which was not entirely her fault.

Vocal concerts, and this was almost a debut event, always promise the thrill of expectation. What will come out of the sea this evening?

The two young singers have much going for them. The soprano, daughter of pianist Marcell Matta, has intuitive musical understanding, which makes a good beginning. She also has a strong personality and keeps everything under her watchful eye. She has the kind of built-in risk detector invaluable to any singer. She knows how to present her voice. It is not large but it has power and colour. Indeed it has two colours — one, the lower and middle tones, dark with a kind of Spanish vibration. The other, after about A flat and above, is of another tone — bright silver, sharp, powerful, at times developing into a shriek. Not pleasant. But the voice has quality and a sound of its own. She will have to walk the canary bird circuit for a bit until the voice develops. Later, probably, she will aim less for high E flats of the light coloratura and become a proper lyric. Her personality shows this ambition. She chose very interesting music.

Tamer Tewfik has a strong voice. He makes all the expected tenor sounds without any squeezing or harshness. This voice is not too lyrical. It is robust. Plenty of range, power and a certain pleasure for the listener. But he has one thing that turns his effort in the wrong direction. At the end of every phrase demanding power and emotional gear change he makes a *coup de glotte* and lets out a sob. This gimmick has long gone. left the opera years ago, went into cabaret and now that cabaret is gone too, it has ended up in burlesque. He should beware; it classifies him.

He began with the *Madame Butterfly* aria of Pinkerton — short, sharp and difficult. He brought it off but with a sob to finish. She sang one of the Oscars arias from the *Ballo in Maschera*, competently, though without any of the necessary irony or insolence. Then the tenor — a melodie of Bizet — lightness and ease — then the *Villanelle of Dell Acqua* for soprano, her darker tone appealing. She knows how to vary her sound. But the words were not clear throughout. At this point Tamer Tewfik, his voice gaining confidence, sang Cilèa's *La Solita Storia* quite beautifully. Not enough space on the palace stairway for the sounding boards to carry far but it showed the voice needs space, a good sign. Then for Amira Selim the most beautiful piece of the concert, Juliet's aria, the dark and very sad moment from Bellini's masterpiece *I capuletti ed I montecchi*. Throughout the nineteenth century this was a staple opera, though it has only recently been rediscovered by the twentieth. Selim did it well enough. The dark tones of her voice apt and tragic. The pathos was missing and the aria needs a grand manner which put the young singer on her guard. Then, for him, a Neapolitan song, for her a cheery piece from Donizetti's comic opera *Daughter of the Regiment*.

They finished with the Brindisi from *Traviata*. He better than she. She missed her lunge into the big tune but together they brought their concert to a broad-voiced and colourful finish. Came flowers and cheer.

Art

Engraved in the memory

Engravings of Alexandria, from the 15th to the 19th century, show a city that is never quite itself. **Nigel Ryan** examines the stage settings

Frederik Ludwig Norden spent a year in Egypt at the behest of King Christian VI of Denmark. Most of his time was taken up with travelling the length and breadth of the country, selecting vantage points and sitting down to sketch. In the 12 months he spent in Egypt he produced enough material to furnish engravings for 230 illustrations and maps which were published, in 1740, as *Voyages in Egypt and Nubia*. Two of his engravings are included in "Alexandria calls Egypt", an exhibition of engravings of Alexandria — collected by the architect Mohamed Awad and subsequently donated to the Alexandria Preservation Trust — shown at the Italian Cultural Centre in Zamalek.

By the standards of the mid-18th century Frederik Ludwig Norden was really quite remarkable, not least because he deemed a degree of topographical accuracy important in his work. For most of Norden's contemporaries mood was to take precedence over the accurate depiction of sites. Reality was shrouded in a vision of how the ruins of the antique past should appear. And while the exact nature of Norden's commission from the Danish king is unclear the two examples on show display an intention to document rather than to transform what he saw into an image appealing to a European sensibility strongly inclined to the picturesque.

If Norden stands out among his contemporaries he also marks the beginning of a break with a tradition that had long dominated depictions of foreign, and particularly 'exotic' lands. The earliest piece in the exhibition, a view of Alexandria produced in 1493 and published in the Chronicle of Nurembourg — an early attempt at an illustrated history of the world — is utterly fanciful. Though the Latin text appended to the illustration gives a recognisable, if thumb nail, sketch of the early history of the city, the illustration itself is utterly fanciful, a prosperous burgher town transplanted to the southern shores of the Mediterranean.

There are certain common features — a capital, a fort, ships in harbour, a mosque. Combinations of these are reconstructed in a haphazard way, with local colour added. The image of the city remains subservient to a text already written. "As to the present state of... Alexandria, it is almost wholly ruinated." So wrote, Corneille le Bruyn, who published engravings of the city in *A Voyage to the Levant*... And to emphasise the point he distributes fallen columns and broken pediments liberally across the foreground of the two engravings dated 1702.

Luigi Mayer, a century later, adopts similarly theatrical ploys. His 1802 interior view of the catacombs has the subterranean space opening out behind what looks for all the world like a proscenium arch. The stage space is flooded with light and crowded with colourful characters dressed in suitably colourful clothes. The orient as stage set, backdrop to a rather sumptuous costume drama. This is only one tradition, the tradition in which David Roberts, doyen of European image makers of the Orient, was to work. It is of no little significance that Roberts began his career as a set designer at the Drury Lane Theatre in London. All too often, his engravings look like sketches for an extravagant production of Aida.

When in the early decades of the 19th century Count Louis de Farbin embarked on a voyage through the Near East accompanied by 13 artists, among them Anne Claude Thienon and Eugene Bourgois, the intention was to produce one more *Voyages dans le Levant*, prefaced and published by the count himself. If the engravings from the volume included in this exhibition are anything to go by the result is a Levant that, apart from the palms, might as well be located in the Valley of the Rhine. Alexandria was represented in the *Voyages* by three views, Porte de Rosette, Hôpital des Grecs and Obelisques de Cléopâtre. These are replete with gothic detailing — a dog gnaws the carcass of a dead animal in the foreground, the trees bend as if caught in a typhoon. Northern European pantheism looks far from convincing when transplanted to Egypt's northern coast. It is as incredible as an iceberg floating over the horizon to enter Alexandria's Eastern harbour.

The path trod by Norden, the Danish king's emissary, was to wait more than half a century before being fully explored. But then, on 1 July 1798, it happened. Napoleon arrived and shortly after work on the *Description de l'Egypte* was begun. Surveyors, cartographers, men bearing rulers and pedometers and all kinds of measuring devices were dispatched across the length and breadth of the country. The importance of charting Alexandria's harbours was high on the agenda following Nelson's destruction of the French fleet and a detailed map was soon produced. Nothing escaped the scrutiny of the French savants who produced diagrams of Turkish houses, interiors of public baths, plans, elevations and perspectives of public buildings and utilities. Views of the harbours were produced from every conceivable angle. And throughout them all the tricolour flutters in the breeze above Qait Bey. Propaganda, after all, dies hard. And what is encyclopaedism but a form of propaganda? Included in the exhibition, incidentally, is a pretty engraving from the Description, titled the Mosque of St Athanasius.

By the late 19th century tourism had taken over. Alexandria had been bombarded by the British in 1882 — an illustrated newspaper print of the event is a rather chilling reminder of just how cavalier the mass media can be when it comes to the history of others — and the city became, once again, a playground for the European fancy. A selection of small, late 19th century engravings confirm that in the beginning is the end. We do (we always did) want to be beside the sea-side.

Listings

EXHIBITIONS

Group Exhibition
12, Rd 150, Maadi. Tel 350 0081. daily exc Fri, 10am-1.30pm & 5pm-8.30pm. 23 Oct-2 Nov.
Ceramics, paintings and glassware by Salah Taher, Sabri Ragheb, Hoda Mourad, Mohamed Mandour, Gazbeyia Serri and Ossama Mohamed.

Egypt Mother of All Countries
Cairo-Berlin Gallery, 17 Youssef Al-Guindi St, Bab Al-Louk. Tel 393 1764. Daily exc Sun, 12pm-8pm. Until 21 Oct.
Illustrated postcards of the Egypt of yesteryear.

Marlies Pess
Faculty of Applied Arts, Helwan University. Tel 713 312/718 856. Until 23 Oct.
Sculptures constructed from transparent materials.

Gonzalo Endara Crow
Round Gallery of the Opera House, Gezira. Tel 342 0601. Daily 9am-1pm & 3pm-8.30pm. 21-29 Oct.
Myth-inspired paintings by the Ecuadorian artist.

Jemila Yosri
Community Services Association, 4 Rd 21, Maadi. Tel 350 5284. Sun-Wed, 9am-9pm & Thur 9am-5pm. 23-27 Oct.
Watercolours, pastels and oils which portray the lives of Egyptian workers.

Out of Print
Museum of Modern Egyptian Art, Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily 9am-1pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 28 Oct.
British printmaking from 1946 to 1976.

Leila Izzat (Paintings)
Al-Patio Gallery, 4 Rd 77G, Golf Area, Maadi. Tel 351 6643. Daily exc Sun, 10am-7pm. Until 31 Oct.

Alexandria calls Venice
Italian Cultural Centre, 3 Al-Sheikh Al-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. Daily exc Sun, 10am-1pm & 5pm-7pm. Until 23 Oct.
Engravings, paintings and photographs.

The Mosque of Rome (Photography)
Diplomatic Centre, 11 Shagaret Al-Dor St, Zamalek. Tel 341 5419. Daily exc Fri, 10am-3pm & 4pm-8pm. Until 24 Oct.

Joaquina Casas
Spanish Cultural Centre, 20 Boulos Hanna St, Dokki. Tel 360 1746/337 1962. Daily exc Sun, 10am-8pm. Until 27 Oct.
Paintings of desert landscapes and women working outdoors.

Sayed Abdel-Rassoul and Group Exhibition
Salama Gallery, 36 Ahmed Orabi St, Mohandessin. Tel 346 3242. Daily exc Fri, 10am-2.30pm & 5pm-10pm. Until 30 Oct.
Thirty paintings by Abdel-Rassoul commemorating him 40 years after his death. Also on display are collages by Ali Dessouki, Sawsan Amer and Sherif Reda, paintings and batiks.

Video Visions Cairo
Al-Hanager Arts Centre, Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily 10am-10pm, Until 30 Oct.
Group how of installations and video works.

Passage to Eternity
Rare Books and Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo, corner of Al-Sheikh Rihan and Mansour Sts. Tel 357 3874. Until 31 Oct.
Exhibition on Egyptian funerary customs shown in books and photos.

Safeya Mo'in
Ewart Gallery, American University in Cairo, Al-Sheikh Rihan St, Tahrir Sq. Tel 357 5422/3/4. Daily exc Fri 8am-8pm. Until 31 Oct.
Oil paintings of Egyptian landscapes.

Youth Salon
Arts Centre, 1 Al-Maahad Al-Swissri St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8211. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm. Until 31 Oct.
250 works in a variety of media by over 150 artists.

Mohamed Abla
Mashrabiya Gallery, 8 Champollion St, Downtown. Tel 778 623. Daily exc Fri, 11am-8pm. Until 2 Nov.
Sculptures constructed from found objects under the title Future Fossils.

Gamal El-Sagini (Paintings and Sculptures)
Extra, 3 Al-Nessim St, Zamalek. Tel 340 6293. Daily exc Sun 10.30am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 4 Nov.

Omar El-Fayoumi
Espace Gallery, 1 Al-Sherifein St, Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Daily exc Fri, 10am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 7 Nov.
Mixed media paintings under the title His Holiness.

Hungarian Roots of Photography
Sony Gallery, American University in Cairo, Al-Sheikh Rihan St, Tahrir Sq. Tel 357 5422/3/4. Daily exc Fri 9am-12pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 9 Nov.
Photographs from the collection of the Hungarian National Museum of Photography, 1914-1945.

FILMS

Cinemas change their programmes every Monday. The information provided is valid through to Sunday after which it is wise to check with the cinemas.

The Makioka Sisters
Japanese Cultural Centre, 106 Qasr Al-Aini St, Garden City. Tel 355 3962/3/4. 19 Oct, 6pm. Arabic subtitles.
Directed by Kon Ichikawa (1983). Describing the life of four rich sisters after their father's death.

Casanova di Fellini
Italian Cultural Centre, 3 Al-Sheikh Al-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8723. 22 Oct, 7pm.
Diected by Fellini (1976) and starring Donald Sutherland.

Monsieur Klein
French Cultural Centre, 27 Sabri Abu Alam St, Ismailia Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 417 4824/25. Arabic subtitles.
Directed by Joseph Losey (1976) and starring Alain Delon. An opportunistic art dealer uses the Jews' difficult situation under the German occupation to buy their paintings. *19 Oct, 7pm.*

A Week of French Films
Ramsis Hilton I & II, Corniche Al-Nil. Tel 574 7435.
Mon Père Ce Héro (My Father, This Hero)
Directed by Gerard Lauzier (1991) and starring Gerard Depardieu. Veronique spends the summer with her father. She falls in love with a trainer whom she renders jealous by pretending her father is her lover. *23 Oct, 6.30pm & 9pm.*
L'Accompagnatrice (The Attendant)
Directed by Claude Miller (1992) and starring Romane Bohringer. Sophie, a clumsy pianist meets a diva. Sophie lives in the shadow and admiration of this woman. *24 Oct, 6.30pm & 9pm.*
Un Coeur En Hiver (A Heart In Winter)
Directed by Claude Sautet (1992) and starring Daniel Auteuil and Emmanuelle Beart. Maxime and Stephane run a little atelier. The former, a charming extrovert, falls in love with Camille, a young and beautiful violonist. The latter, an impermeable introvert, causes her troubles. *25 Oct, 6.30pm & 9pm.*

Dumb and Dumber
Cosmos II, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
This time Jim Carrey is not very smart.

Honey, I Blew Up The Kids
Rivoli II, 26th July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm, 8pm & 10pm.

The Touchables
Odeon, 4 Dr Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797. Daily 10.30am, 2.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm.
Four girls are after the same man.

Blank Check & Ta'ta' wa Rika wa Kazem Bey
Normandy (outdoor), 31 Al-Ahram St, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0254. Daily 7pm.
Double feature starting with the English film.

Outbreak
Cairo Sheraton, Galaa St. Tel 360 6081/ 348 8600/700. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight.
A killer virus slowly sweeps across the country. Starring Dustin Hoffman.

Stargate
Ramsis Hilton I, Corniche Al-Nil St. Tel 574 7436. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & midnight. Karim I, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 924 830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
Starring Kurt Russel and James Spader.

The Princess and The Blue Rose

Disclosure
Karim II, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 924 830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm. Al-Salam, 65 Abdel-Hamid Badawi St, Heliopolis. Tel 293 1072. Daily 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.
Starring Michael Douglas and Demi Moore in a film that portrays real competition in the real world.

Interview With The Vampire
Tahrir, 112 Tahrir St, Dokki. Tel 335 4726. Daily 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Normandy, 31 Al-Ahram St, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0254. Daily 12.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.
Based on Anne Rice's best-selling novel and starring Tom Cruise, Antonio Banderas and Brad Pitt.

Congo
Metro, 35 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 393 3897. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
Where you are the endangered species.

Emra'a Hazzat 'Arsh Misr (The Woman Who Shook Egypt's Throne)
Miami, 38 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 574 5656. Daily noon, 3.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm. Roxy, Roxy Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0344. Daily 10am, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
Starring Nadia El-Guindi and directed by Nader Galal.

Tuyur Al-Thalam (Birds of the Dark)
Diana Palace, 17 Al-Alfi St, Emadeddin. Tel 924 727. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Cosmos I, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Tiba II, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Ramsis Hilton II, Corniche Al-Nil St. Tel 574 7436. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.
Starring Adel Imam, Youssra and Gamil Rateb.

Atabet Al-Settat (The Women's Threshold)
Rivoli I, 26th July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm, 8pm & 10pm. Tiba I, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.
Starring Nabila Ebeid.

Ehna Awlad Elnaharda (We Are Today's Children)
Lido, 23 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 934 824. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Sphinx, Sphinx Sq, Mohandessin. Tel 346 4017. Daily 8pm.
With Athar El-Hakim.

MUSIC

Opera Aida
Main Hall, Opera House, Gezira. Tel 342 0601/0603. 19 & 22 Oct, 8pm.

Arabic Music Ensemble
Small Hall, Opera House, as above. 19 Oct, 8pm.
Conducted by Salah Ghobashi.

Solisti Veneti
Main Hall, Opera House, as above. 20 Oct, 8pm.
The programme includes works by Pasquali, Vivaldi, Paganini and Tartini, conducted by Claudio Scimone.

Cairo Symphony Orchestra
Main Hall, Opera House, as above. 21 Oct, 8pm.
Performing Nikolai's The Merry Wives of Windsor, Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet and conducted by Taha Nagui.

Music for Clarinet and Piano
Ewart Hall, American University in Cairo, Al-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 578 6089. 25 Oct, 8pm.
Mohamed Hamdy on the clarinet and David Hales on the piano perform a selection of works by Debussy, Poulenc and others.

DANCE

Traditional Dance of Ryukyu
Small Hall, Opera House, Gezira. Tel 342 0601/0603. 20-21 Oct, 8pm & 9.30pm.
Japanese folklore.

Panta Rhei
Main Hall, Opera House, as above. 24-26 Oct, 8pm.
Swiss ballet company Movers performs.

THEATRE

Kaspar
Goethe Institute, 5 Abdel-Salam Aref St, Downtown. Tel 575 9877/779 479. 23 & 24 Oct, 8pm.
Written by Peter Handke, the play is performed in Arabic by the Rebellion Theatre Troupe and directed by Hani Ghanem.

The Princess and The Blue Rose
Al-Hanager Arts Centre, Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. 20-24 Oct, 11am.
A Swiss-Egyptian production for children.

Dastour Ya Siadna (With Your Permission, Masters)
Al-Fann, Ramses St. Tel 578 2444. Daily 9.30pm exc Mon.

Hazz Nawa'em (Nawa'em's Luck)
Al-Houssaper, 16 Al-Ter'a Al-Boulaqaya St. Tel 769 233. Daily 10pm, exc Tues.

Al-Za'im (The Leader)
Al-Haram, Pyramids Road, Giza. Tel 386 3952. Daily exc Tues, 10pm. Mon & Fri 8pm.

Al-Gamila wal Wehshin (The Beautiful and the Ugly)
Al-Zamalek, 13 Shagaret Al-Dor, Zamalek. Tel 341 0660 Daily 10.30pm. exc Fri 8.30pm.

Mama America
Qasr Al-Nil, Qasr Al-Nil St, Tahrir. Tel 575 0761. Daily exc Tues, 10pm. Mon 8pm.

Louly
Balloon, Corniche Al-Nil, Agouza. Tel 347 1718. Daily exc Tues, 9pm.

Ya Nas Efhamou (Try to Understand, People)
Floating Theatre, Fatma Rushdi St. Tel 363 8783. Daily 9.30pm.

Ra's Al-Diouk (Cockerel Dances)
Miami, Talaat Harb St. Tel 767 086. Daily 10pm, exc Tues.

Bahloul fi Istambul (Bahloul in Istanbul)
Hilton Ramsis, Corniche Al-Nil. Tel 574 7435. Daily 10pm, Sun 8pm.

La...Balash Keda (None of That)
Al-Rihani, Emadeddin. Tel 591 3697. Daily exc Wed 10pm. Tues 8.30pm

Hazzemni Ya...
Al-Gezira, Abdel-Aziz Al-Seoud, Manial. Tel 364 4160. Daily 10pm, Fri 8pm.

National Circus
Next to Balloon Theatre, Al-Nil St, Corniche Al-Nil, Al-Agouza. Tel 347 0612. Daily, exc Wed, 9pm.

LECTURES

The prospects of Egyptian democracy: The 1990-95 Parliamentary Elections
Oriental Hall, American University in Cairo, Al-Sheikh Rihan St, Tahrir Sq. Tel 357 5436. 18 Oct, 7pm.
Lecture by Saadeddin Ibrahim, professor of Political Sociology at the AUC and chairman of the Ibn Khaldoun Centre.

All information correct at time of going to press. However, it remains wise to check with venues first, since programmes, dates and times are subject to change at very short notice.
Please telephone or send information to Listings, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Galaa St, Cairo. Tel 5786064. Fax 5786089/833.

Compiled by **Injy El-Kashef**

Around the galleries



Hussein Bikar

PORTRAITS and landscapes in pastel and oil by **Hussein Bikar** are on exhibit as part of a group show at **Salama Gallery**.

The **Opera House Gallery** plays host to works by two painters and a ceramicist. **Doaa Khaled's** and **Ihab Mahmoud's** paintings both contain folkloric decorative motifs, but Khaled's portraits are recognisably academic. Sharing the gallery space are clay wall hangings and sculptures by **Ayman Abdel-Moneim**.

The **Youth Salon** at the **Arts Centre, Zamalek**, continues. Most prize winning paintings — including **Shadi El-Neshouqati's**— tend towards the abstract and are executed on several separate panels which are nonetheless meant to be seen as parts of a whole.

Reviewed by **Nagwa El-Ashri**

Eye on the present

Farouk Bidaya wa Nihaya (Farouk, the Beginning and the End), Mohamed Ouda, Cairo: Dar Al-Hilal, 1995

The publication of *Farouk Bidaya wa Nihaya* begs several questions, not least why such a staunch Nasserite author as Mohamed Ouda should have decided to tackle, in more than 400 pages, the forced abdication of Farouk more than four decades after the event.

The monarchy is a thing of the past. What Ouda seeks to do is to revise the official history in order to set the record straight. The reign of Egypt's last monarch has become the site of conflict: facts are readily distorted by commentators who have various axes to grind. The figure of Farouk is itself shrouded in misrepresentation and obfuscation. Given the ease with which such a relatively clear-cut period as the reign of Farouk and its attendant corruption can be distorted, how much more can be blown out of proportion? In the absence of any semblance of objective criteria, victories can all too easily be recast as defeats, achievements as decline.

Ouda seeks to reconstruct the story of Farouk almost exclusively from documentary evidence. Indeed, so scrupulously does he restrict himself to documents that at moments Ouda might be characterised as a scribe, recording the story of the last Egyptian king. Seldom does the author intrude on his own narrative, preferring instead to occupy the sidelines and allow the documents to speak for themselves. The reader will encounter none of the rhetoric characteristic of books on Farouk and his reign. All the usual epithets — philanderer, decadent, depraved — are absent from this book.

The book starts with the letter sent by the Residency in Cairo to Prince Ahmed Fouad, on 9 October 1917, advising him of his succession following the deposition of Sultan Hussein Kamel. Following the British occupation of Egypt, rulers were deposed or enthroned according to the extent of their deference to and compliance with the policies of the occupiers.

By the time Farouk was born to King Fouad, the latter had already undergone much vetting, proving himself compliant with the dictates of Britain. Britain, as a consequence, accepted that Farouk be named heir to the throne, and hastened to dispatch an English governess to prepare him for an English public school.

Such was the preparation and initiation of Egypt's last king, the man whose 16-year reign would witness negotiations for independence from Britain, the second World War, the conflict between a dictatorial palace and political parties, the 1948 war then an army coup.

These events are narrated by the author with impartiality, precision and exactitude. Indeed, what analysis he ventures comes naturally within the narrative — a trademark of his work.

Ouda's treatment of the Wafd and its history exemplifies the impartiality of the Nasserite author. The Wafd, key player in Egyptian politics between the 1919 and 1952 revolutions, was, after all, viewed as the Free Officers' most dangerous opponent. After 1952 it was subjected to a sustained assault that finally led to its dissolution. In his meticulous chronicle of the Wafd, Ouda staunchly absolves the party from allegations levelled at it by post-1952 Revolution commentators, charges that included corruption as well as complicity with both the British and the palace.

Farouk Bidaya wa Nihaya includes an important section on the ramifications of 4 February 1942. Quite why the Wafd succumbed to British pressure that it form a new government has consistently puzzled commentators. With characteristic meticulousness and historical scholarship, Ouda narrates the events of 4 February and analyses the reasons that impelled the Wafd to accept to be reinstated. He also offers a painstaking analysis of the complex relationship between Farouk and the party.

Ouda also pays close attention to the palace's relationship with the Society of Muslim Brothers. Farouk, anxious to flatter the religious sentiments of Egyptians, courted the Muslim Brothers who in turn supported the king against his opponents. But after having extended his patronage to the group, Farouk was later to view them with increasing hostility, culminating in the assassination of Hassan El-Banna.

If the author abandons the austere impartiality that distinguishes his historiography, it is when charting the role of communist groups before 1952, and particularly during the uprising of 1946. Although the factions of the communist movement at the time were very cliquish, they played an effective and important role within the nationalist movement. How else can one explain the number of communists among the free officers? Yet unfortunately this appears to be the one section of the book where Mohamed Ouda abandons his objectivity.

Ouda's work cannot be neatly tucked away under the rubric of biography. Could Ouda have written about the various trends within the nationalist movement and about the complicity of the Muslim Brotherhood with Farouk merely to produce a biography of Egypt's last monarch?

Ouda writes about the past with an eye on the present. It is this that makes his biography of Farouk an important publishing event.

Reviewed by ***Mahmoud El-Wardani***



Plain Talk

With every passing day my conviction that Egypt has many friends worldwide is confirmed. If one were to trace exhibitions and festivals of Egyptian arts abroad, one would discover that not a year goes by without the occurrence of such an event.

Last week I had the pleasure of meeting the mayor of Florida and his wife, among a group of visitors from the Florida International Museum in St Petersburg. The group is here to finalise negotiations over a festival bearing the name "Splendours of Ancient Egypt", which the Florida Museum is organising in cooperation with the Egyptian Antiquities Organisation.

The exhibition is due to open in January 1996 and run until June. James E Brougton, an old friend of mine, is both the director of the exhibition and the executive director of the Florida International Museum. My friendship with Brougton dates back to 1985 when he was the director of cultural affairs on the staff of Mayor Hackett of Memphis, Tennessee. At that time, Memphis had started a small museum named after the late President Sadat which was inaugurated by Mrs Jehan El-Sadat.

My relationship with Memphis, Mayor Hackett, James Brougton and their public relations officer Jack Kyle continued, and a sisterhood agreement was concluded between Memphis Giza and Memphis Tennessee. The agreement was signed in Cairo by Mayor Hackett and the then governor of Giza, Abdel-Hamid Hassan.

James Brougton is known for initiating a Memphis international cultural series called Wonder, a series of annual, large-scale cultural exchanges with culture and foreign affairs ministries and prominent museums around the world.

Ramses the Great, organised in conjunction with the Egyptian Antiquities Organisation, was the series' first major exhibition. Attracting 675,000 visitors, the exhibition generated an $85 million profit. As a result of its popularity and in an attempt to consolidate bonds between the two Memphises, the mayor had a pyramid built in the centre of the town.

The programme continued, with exhibitions on Catherine the Great from the State Heritage Museum in Leningrad, followed by the Splendours of the Ottoman Sultans, The Etruscans: Legacy of a Lost Civilisation, and lastly Napoleon, which featured art treasures from many major French museums.

This cultural programme has created a valuable educational opportunity for the whole community, including children. The educational outreach, according to Brougton, involved all city, county, parochial and private schools within a 150-mile radius of Memphis. Its impact was best demonstrated when 110,000 school children attended the Ramses the Great exhibition as part of the school curriculum.

And now comes the Splendours of Ancient Egypt. The event has already been publicised in the St Petersburg press. The *St Petersburg Times* published a lengthy article entitled *Treasures of a Different Age* quoting Brougton as saying: "In the exhibition business, in the art world, there is no country and no civilisation that has the mystique that Egypt has." The director of the Tampa Museum of Art is also quoted as saying: "I don't think it can miss, there is such an incredible amount of interest in Egyptian culture."

The curator of the exhibition is acclaimed Egyptologist Dr Robert Bianchi who said: "The focus here is to present Egyptian art to the audience in a [novel] way. We want to present the way the Ancient Egyptians themselves looked at the world around them, and contrast that to the way the West looks at the world."

Apart from 75 Pharaonic artifacts, this 'celebration of Egypt in America' will present opportunities such as contemporary art exhibitions, performing troupes, tourism exchanges, educational symposia, and trade and business shows.

James Brougton writes in the official brochure for the event: "Four thousand years of Pharaonic civilisation have left us with a legacy of truly remarkable creations that continue to stimulate our curiosity and admiration and we are deeply honoured to have the privilege to bring Splendours of Ancient Egypt to the Florida International Museum."

Mursi Saad El-Din

Game of nations

Diplomacy, Henry Kissinger, Simon and Shuster, New York, 1995

In this volume Mr Kissinger's reputation for diplomatic virtuosity is extended to include his qualities as a remarkable historian. His eminently readable book takes us from an analytical discourse on European diplomatic history, viewed from the perspective of a working diplomat, to the actual dilemmas facing the international community today. The first part of the book involves us in a reading of power balance, exploring the calculations made by Richelieu as he faced the expanding and encircling power of the Hapsburgs. He then moves on to Metternich, the Congress of Vienna and attempts to contain Napoleonic France. Next we pass on to the practice of diplomatic forgery by Bismarck, justified by Machiavellian theories of "political necessity", ending with the *real politik* of Adolf Hitler and his many imitators.

Excellent reading for the young diplomat though, admittedly, the volume contains nothing new and Mr Kissinger is inclined at times to be a mite too doctrinaire. Diplomacy is, unfortunately, full of surprises and even the best laid plans of master diplomats can go astray.

History refuses to be contained within mega systems. Equally the project proposed by Stanford University in California for the conducting of diplomacy — a kind of game of nations based on mathematical calculations of probabilities — is unlikely to be a smashing success. The most brilliant computer can never be a substitute for such as Talleyrand and Bismarck who might, between them, have programmed some startlingly revolutionary software.

Mr Kissinger's track record is impressive. Few have ever exhibited such flexibility and pragmatism. And for those who would seek a better understanding of the US with regard to world affairs, this is an invaluable book, treating the reader to an interpretation of American foreign policy which could only come from an intelligent inside observer.

The Egyptian reader should be particularly interested. Egypt, after all, counts among the first countries to be inspired by President Wilson's fourteen points. In 1918 a National Referendum was held which overwhelmingly voted to send an Egyptian Delegation (Wafd) to the peace conference at Versailles to secure the implementation, on behalf of Egypt, of Wilson's fourteenth point which called for the self determination of all peoples. British opposition provoked a national uprising of such intensity in the spring of 1919 that it eventually led to the abolition of the British Protectorate and the setting up of an Egyptian constitutional monarchy in 1923.

The book is punctuated by shrewd insights into the ways and mannerisms of world leaders. We are treated to an investigation into the mental processes of James Foster Dulles, Adenauer, Khruschev, Kennedy and their contemporaries.

For Nixon, Kissinger retains an undisguised admiration. He seems somewhat surprised that such an outstanding politician should have been so easily sacrificed for the sort of sins that most Western leaders, from Richelieu to Napoleon and Bismarck had practiced with impunity. Which brings us to one of the most interesting and valuable aspects of *Diplomacy*. The book offers a working solution to the problems that must be faced by American diplomacy as a whole, charting a path between the ideals of early America, and the need for a realistic awareness of the limitations of idealism. Kissinger himself trod the line between the Wilsonian impulse and the need to accommodate.

Some of the most impressive passages in the book are those chapters dealing with the Vietnam War. Kissinger was deeply involved in the Vietnam crisis. As Nixon's secretary of state he was saddled with the difficult task of finding a way out of the war. He explains to us the difficulties attendant on a war with a guerrilla army, a kind of conflict for which the regular forces of the US were not equipped.

He describes how a Wilsonian idealism was responsible for the American involvement in what was, after all, a post-colonial conflict between France and a formerly subject people. To intervene on behalf of a colonialist ally went against the Wilsonian grain. An unenthusiastic France was reluctantly induced to declare her intention of granting the Vietnamese their independence. Ngo Dinh Diem, who had inherited French rule, clashed with South Vietnamese Buddhists, and in May 1963 his troops opened fire on protesting Buddhist demonstrators in Hue, killing several priests. Such actions were hardly compatible with the idealistic view of Americans who believed that they were supposed to be defending Vietnam from the communists. Kissinger charts America's ever increasing involvement in Vietnam. From a mere handful of officials the number of Americans in Vietnam increased to more than 2,000 units of over half a million fighting men by 1964. By 1965 Washington had concluded that the Vietnam War could not be won and a negotiated peace had to be faced. With the coming to power of Nixon, the new American president was now faced with the almost impossible task of disengagement in Vietnam. It was a process in which Kissinger played an important role. The description of this traumatic period in American history is one of the highlights of the book.

The formidable threat to the Wilsonian ethic is the Washington lobby system, apparently derived from the Tammany Hall school of corrupt city government. We Arabs have learned to our cost the danger of the lobby. Few would-be congressmen and legislators can afford to neglect the Jewish lobby which in America has given Israel a completely unfair advantage over the Arabs and is to a large extent responsible for the distress and bloodshed of a protracted war which has lasted generations. But above all this book gives us an insight into the formidable task faced by American diplomacy, whether it be the countering of Soviet ultimatums over Berlin, the termination of the Vietnam War, the handling of the Suez crisis or the tortuous and unending exchanges over Palestine. He shows us a country where the traditionalist values of its revolution still survive in the turmoil and cross currents of the contemporary world. The Wilsonian ethic is still very much alive in the US and Mr Kissinger treats it with the respect that it deserves. America, after all, grew out of a revolution against colonialism and a dedication to self determination and the rights of man.

Reviewed by ***Adel Sabit***

Cityscapes and scribbling colonels

Mahmoud El-Wardani provides an overview of the more interesting of the month's publications

Al-Qarriya... Al-Qarriya, Al-Ard... Al-Ard wa Intihar Ra'id Al-Fada' **(The Village... the Village, the Land... the Land and the Suicide of an Astronaut), Muammar Gadaffi, Al-Jamahiriya for Publication and Distribution, Libya, 1995**

The majority of Arab leaders have contented themselves with ruling their peoples in their preferred manner. Some though, including the Libyan leader, have decided to torture their populations by writing fiction. Gadaffi's recent collection of short stories — his first, and hopefully his last — includes 12 tales lacking any coherence, and which fail to adhere to any recognisable rules of fiction writing. Naive compilations, reflecting on the city, the village and death. Rulers can award themselves every conceivable honour and medal. They cannot, however, turn themselves into writers. The collection, though, is introduced by Ahmed El-Faqih, a Libyan novelist of some distinction.

Tarikh Al-Quds **(The History of Jerusalem), A'arif Basha El-A'arif, Dar Al-Ma'arif, Cairo, 1995**

The second edition of a book that first appeared in 1951 by Palestinian historiographer El-A'arif. The author was born in Jerusalem in 1892, educated in Constantinople and conscripted to the Ottoman army before returning to Jerusalem in 1919. The book gives a detailed history of the city from ancient times, through the Crusades, the Ottoman conquest, and until the time of the British mandate. Informed by the author's own experiences, among the most fascinating chapters is that dealing with Jerusalem at the end of the British mandate. It documents the Arab identity of the city and the traumatic changes Jerusalem underwent after the Israeli state was created.

Mudun Al-Akhrin **(Cities of others; an anthology of poetry), selected and translated by Ahmed Abdel-Moeti Hegazi, General Organisation for Cultural Palaces, Cairo, 1995**

This anthology contains works by 19 poets which Hegazi, himself a poet of distinction, has selected. The fact that the volume was compiled and translated by a poet lends the contents a special flavour. The common thread running through the poems is the city as experienced by the poet, from Cavafy and Baudelaire to Eliot and Ezra Pound. In introducing the volume Hegazi writes: "In selecting poems for inclusion in this volume I sought the image of myself in the mirrors of other poets... my affinity to them was not merely based on a shared craft or shared subject matter, but rather on a world view of a city that has always facinated me, along with many other Arab poets."

Khulasat Al-Tawhidi **(Al-Tawhidi Reader), compiled and introduced by Gamal El-Ghitani, The Higher Council for Culture, Cairo, 1995**

Abu Hayyan Al-Tawhidi is the uncontested master of Arabic prose. He lived to a great old age, reputedly reaching a century, and for much of the time he was both poor and persecuted. Before his death he took all his books and set fire to them, a rather dramatic disavowal of life. Many of Al-Tawhidi's preoccupations, a thousand years after his birth at the beginning of the tenth century, resonate across the millenium. Novelist Gamal El-Ghitani provides the reader with representative samples of Al-Tawhidi's most important writings, including his final treatise, *Why I Burned all my Books*. The volume also includes an introduction by El-Ghitani which includes biographical and bibliographical details.

Shaharazad fi Al-Fikr Al-Arabi Al-Hadith **(Sheherazade in Modern Arab Thought), Mustafa Abdel-Ghani, Dar Sharqiyat, Cairo 1995**

The footsteps of Sheherazade are traced from her origins in the Arabian Nights, through her wanderings in the West, until she is retrieved, seven centuries later, by the East. Ghani outlines Sheherazade's influence on Western thought in the 18th century, in addition to focusing on the manner in which several Arab writers and thinkers dealt with the myth of Sheherazade. He goes on to analyse the ideological biases of Arab intellectuals in dealing with the Arabian Nights and its central character, concluding with a review of those modern Arab texts informed by readings of the Arabian Nights.

Al-Mout Yamor min Hunah **(Death Passes from Here), Abdu Khal, Al-Mou'sassa Al-Arabiya lil Darasat wa Al-Nashr, Beirut, 1995**

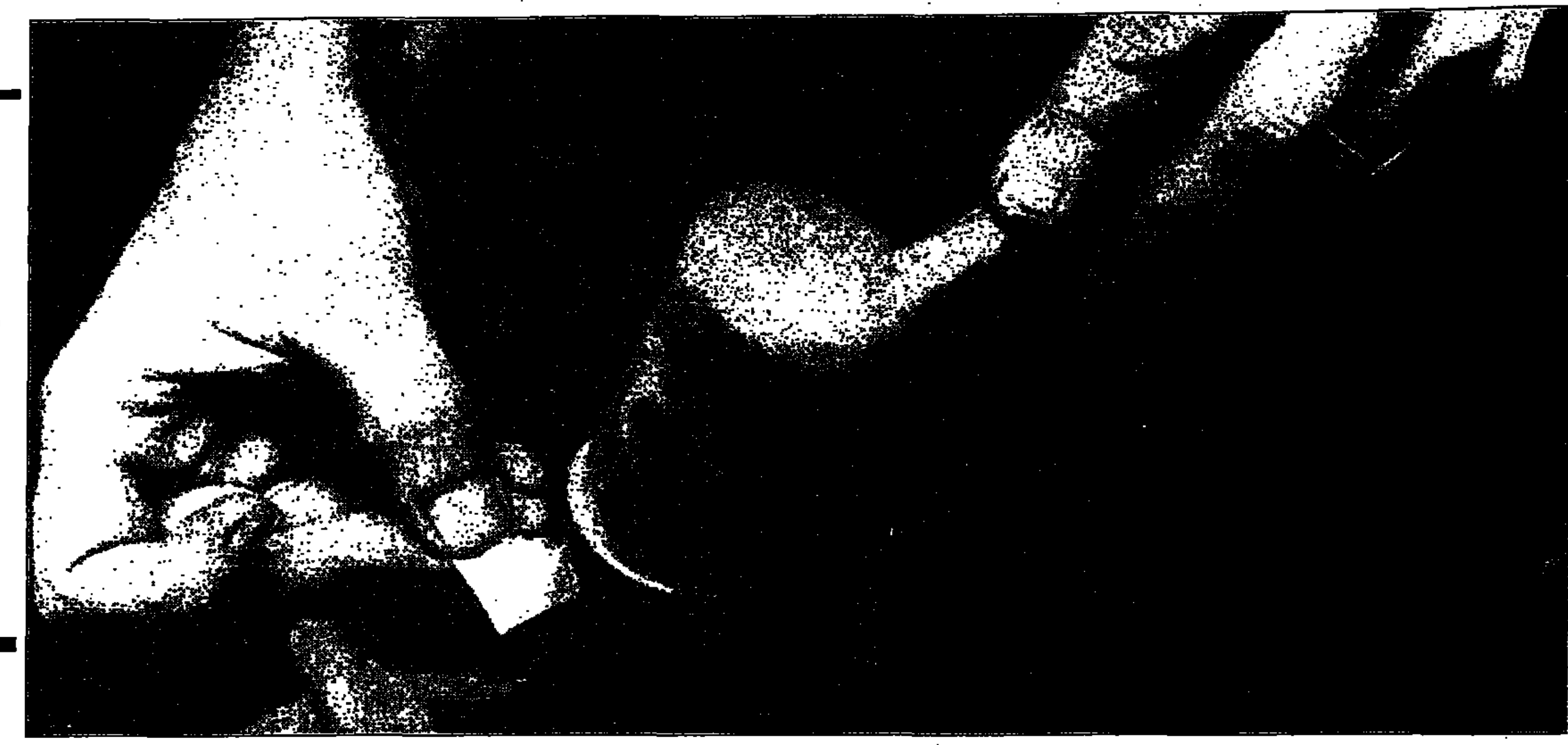
This novel, set in a pre-oil rich Saudi village, provides a panoramic overview of the lives of ordinary people. The remote village, in the depths of the Arabian peninsula is brought vividly to life by Abdu Khal, who clearly sympathises with the plight of the village inhabitants who toil under the dual burden of an unforgiving nature and rulers who understand no language beyond the language of the whip.

A'shiq Filistin.. Qais Al-Zoubaidi **(Qais Al-Zoubaidi, Lover of Palestine), Mohsen Weifi, Cutural Development Fund, Cairo, 1995**

The Cultural Development Fund has undertaken the publication of a volume intended to introduce the work of Qais Al-Zoubaidi, an Iraqi filmmaker whose work comprises one of the most important documents on Palestine. Al-Zoubaidi, who was expelled from Iraq in 1968, studied film in the GDR in the early seventies. All his films have focussed on the saga of the Palestinian struggle. The first section of the volume analyses the cinematic vocabulary employed by Al-Zoubaidi, while the second section comprises a critique of his oeuvre, from the appearance of *Construction and Defence* in 1969 to *Voice of the Silent Time*, his sixteenth film, which appeared in 1991. The volume also includes an appendix composed of articles written by Al-Zoubaidi along with the script of *Far from the Homeland*.

Necessary passions

Both are women, both make jewellery. The resemblance stops there. As *Al-Ahram Weekly* discovers, Azza Fahmi and Suzanne El-Masri have very different ideas about the art of adornment



Part of jewellery making depends on how delicate, artful and able hands can be *photo: Adel Ahmed*

With only the design in mind

At first glance, Azza Fahmi's jewellery is of the traditional, handmade variety, inspired by Islamic motifs. Take a closer look: rings, necklaces, bracelets have been modified and acquired modern lines in silver, gold or both together.

Although now only a designer, Fahmi spent more than 20 years in both design and production. She now considers herself at the peak of her creativity and inspiration. She attributes that to her sophisticated social network and the research following up on every piece she produces.

Fahmi also claims to have changed the concept of jewellery among Egyptian and Arab women. "A wide circle of upper class women, for instance, now appreciate traditional Bedouin earrings and wear them," she said.

But making jewellery came to Fahmi by coincidence. As a graduate of the Faculty of Fine Arts in the early sixties, she worked for eight years as a book illustrator in the Information Authority. Then Fahmi stumbled across a book called *Mediaeval Jewellery in Europe*. "I was *surprised to find* my heart beating heavily as I flipped through the pages of the book."

Despite her family's objections, she worked as an apprentice in a silver shop in Khan Al-Khalili for three years, spending the afternoons and evenings hammering, soldering and filing. "*Hagg* Sayed probably accepted me only because no other woman had ever come to learn from him before," Fahmi remembers. For her first lesson, Fahmi bought raw silver from a shop nearby for three pounds; the capital outlay was later compensated by a profit of 15 pounds from selling the products she made out of this silver.

Fahmi learnt all the technical aspects of the profession from *Hagg* Sayed: how to file, melt, solder... She returned to his workshop whenever she needed professional advice.

When Fahmi left *Hagg* Sayed in the early '70s, she bought a new set of tools, rented an apartment to work in and soon was able to hold her first exhibition. "Those were the happiest *moments of my life because I sold every piece I* made."

A problem arose, however: Fahmi found herself incapable of implementing all her design ideas: "Because I was reading a lot, my imagination exceeded the capabilities of my hands," she remembers. In 1976, given a six-month grant by the head of the British Council in Egypt to study jew-



ellery design in London. When she came back, she rented a proper workshop in Boulaq Al-Dakrour and hired a few workers to help her as her work became more elaborate. She sold the jewellery through an art dealer or through personal connections until she opened her gallery in the early 1980s.

Fahmi now works only on design; artisans execute the actual pieces. She is planning to open a new factory, built on an 800-metre plot and worth LE1.5 million, by the end of this year. So will she move from handmade pieces into an industrially produced line? "I got the best machines from Italy, not to stop handmade items but to save the finishings now done in other workshops."

Fahmi uses only Egyptian stones in her jewellery: turquoise, amber and black coral, among others. But she imports all the fittings from abroad: India, England and the US.

Fahmi holds two or three international shows abroad and four shows in Egypt every year, but 70 per cent of her work is sold in Egypt and the Arab world. With the new factory opening up soon, she hopes to be able to make various pieces accessible to "another class of women" as well as her current clientele.

Jewellery has given Fahmi "more self-confidence, taught me to be more patient, to look for details and, mostly, to love Egypt: to take on responsibility for its Islamic heritage."

Nermeen El-Nawawi

"Looking for what is not there"

Her hands come as a surprise — strong, knotted almost, cuticles stained black. Hands do not lie. Suzanne El-Masri is a petite woman with the face of a Pharaonic cat. She is also a woman who works with her hands, and this manual labour is important to her — "without it, you cannot know your material, you remain limited to the purely theoretical level."

But El-Masri is hardly a manual labourer. She works with silver — not exactly the gold against which she rebelled when a young art student, as the epitome of bourgeois beautification — but adornment nonetheless. Every piece she works on is a tiny work of art awaiting the final touch — the woman who will wear them. El-Masri designs with people in mind. Hers are not the pure Mondrian-inspired shapes popular among Europeans; nor are they the heavy, austere forms of ethnic jewellery. Influences abound: Maghribi enamel-work, Yemeni bead patterns, organic designs: dead leaves, flowers, fossils... Yet no piece is exactly what it appears to be. Bedouin earrings are subverted by intricate, almost architectural constructions integrated into the back, concealed from the eye of the beholder, the wearer's secret. "This is part of my character," says El-Masri. "Looking for what is not there." Lapis or turquoise nestle into the folds of O'Keefe-like flowers, built up layer by painstaking layer onto a skeletal base of high-grade silver until they seem to wrinkle and fade, enfolding the small history of their creation. Her work manages to convey both a delicate, almost weightless quality and the impression of solidity and strength. Each piece bears the traces of its construction: its trial by fire or the hammer.

El-Masri carries out every step of the production process herself, using a different technique for every piece. "You must know the material you work with," she explains, "and then there is the pleasure of the work itself. I find great pleasure, I find myself in manual work." Her studio resembles a laboratory of sorts — a blow-torch, a butane bottle, lumps of wax, unlabelled bottles arranged on a small shelf, instruments vaguely reminiscent of a do-it-yourself torture chamber. She cuts, hammers, melts, solders, shapes and files the sheet silver into a multitude of shapes, bent over her bench on average ten hours a day. "This," she says simply, "is what I do."

For El-Masri, who does not seem like the kind of woman driven to work by sheer physical necessity, making jewellery is a pleasure, but also a passion. "You cannot do anything without passion. Without it, the routine is unbearable." She could have turned this passion to profit, commissioned pieces, moved into design and away from execution, but she did not. She wants that feeling of being elbow-deep in the whole process, and of being absolutely free to design and create anything that comes to mind. "If I don't have this freedom, I don't want to work. I'll do



anything else, but not this. Until now, I still make what I want." There is nothing industrial about her work. It is more reminiscent of a craft, but no traditions were passed down to her whole-sale. "I could have done it the easy way — I imagine there is an easier way," she laughs. El-Masri's work began with experimentation, and through trial and error she came to know what techniques worked best for the various styles she was creating. "It took years of fumbling," she laughs.

This experimentation seems to be a recurrent theme throughout her life. She did not care much for a niche and a stable, predictable life. An ordinary high school student, she studied hard and excelled in mathematics. She went on to study engineering, which ultimately was not a waste of time — "a scientific formation is useful. It helps you calculate and plan the results of what you are doing, to know how the volumes, proportions and weight will work out." Then she took off, to New York and art school. For a *young fine arts student, it was the whole experience* that mattered: music, museums, movies... "Art was the great discovery. It changed my life. It is a different world that comes to you, a different state." She was entirely submerged in it for three years, then decided that working with silver was more satisfying than clay or paint. "Silver," she says, her eyes lighting up, "has many dimensions. You can manipulate it in many ways. You can play with it. You can melt it and work with it as if it were liquid, almost. The traditional technique is only one way of dealing with silver. But in order to discover all the dimensions, you must work with it. It takes you from one step to another and the process has no end. The material itself leads you from discovery to discovery. I discover myself through the work process. If I were to cancel this, I would have no reason to work."

Pascale Ghazaleh

Pot pourri

On the corniche

From time to time, the Maadi corniche becomes the object of some unscheduled effort at improvement. Or so must the people in charge think. Mind you, lighting it properly has not crossed anybody's mind yet. The part that most interests the town planners is the median divider. This is where all talents concentrate. Over the years it has been the scene of many attempts to make it look as if it wasn't just an added obstacle in the path of the missile-like engines that fly to and from Maadi day and night. A more aesthetic obstacle, perhaps? It has been made larger, then narrower, almost flat then bordered by huge cement boulders, painted black, painted white then painted black and white. Huge, bright nails have also been added to the road itself in some part in an attempt to please tyre dealers. There is, however, this narrow space, not quite half a metre wide, between cement blocks that seems to defy all decorative initiatives.

Unlike the Pyramid Road's median — which is much larger — Maadi's cannot sport bathroom tiles around flower beds. More modest — and short of space — on this side of town, planners short of money-wasting ideas have now simply planted the narrow strip with a few anaemic trees surrounded by more huge cement blocks, which, in the unlikely event that they are left to grow to full height, will stand a fair chance of toppling from their narrow perch.

Last week on my way downtown I briefly observed a scene that confirmed my bleak assessment of this year's beautification scheme. The misguided tree-planting effort of the town planners stands very little chance of coming to fruition.

Two garbage carts full to the brim were hurtling down the wrong side of the corniche, one driven by a child the other by an older man. Suddenly the old man, crossing at top speed, whipped his donkeys across the median, spilling some of his cart's contents as he went. Uprooting a few saplings on his path, he was soon on the other side, galloping once more against the traffic. The small boy followed his example, albeit with more difficulty. A great deal of garbage was spilled before the donkeys managed to get across the median. Finally they made it but the cart and donkeys remained on the strip until five or six more young trees had been trampled to death. Almost overturning his cart, the boy managed to reach the corniche and galloped off in hot pursuit of his elder.

A disciplinarian at heart, I felt like giving chase to the father-son couple and their equipage and forcing them to repair the damage. But then I thought better of it.

Why should they have cared? Did these poor saplings represent anything more than an added obstacle on their course? Could they possibly see them as objects of beauty or living things now annihilated by their irresponsible gallivanting? Did they realise the danger of their actions? And the spilled garbage? What does litter mean to people who deal in garbage for a living?

I remembered a little boy whom I saw once perched on a similar cart, also in Maadi. He was letting his donkeys have their way, eating whatever plants they pleased on the roadside. He was busy picking handfuls of refuse and throwing them out of the cart. He was shouting abuse all the while. Questioned, this boy explained: "My father beat me up because I don't bring enough money home every day. Well, now I've decided to ruin him. I won't bring anything home." While talking, he chose a bottle, looked at it, then hurled it as far as he could. "He can sell this bottle for ten piastres, this is his money I am throwing away," he informed me. I stood there for a while, watching him pick and choose, evaluating each object at a quick glance, then throwing it hard, making sure it broke. Obviously, he did not want another garbage collector to have it. Garbage was a precious commodity, the stuff his family made a living on.

So why would I expect any of these young boys to care for a few sickly trees, presumably planted to please the eyes of the town planners themselves? Motorists, at any rate, just as frequently zoom casually across the median, wreaking destruction and death. And why would I think that the spilled garbage could offend them as it offended me? I imagined the father beating up the boy because he had lost most of his cart's contents in his perilous crossing. The corniche will not look any worse for the loss of a few trees, whose future was at best uncertain. Maybe next year the planners will dream up a different scheme anyway; or maybe, finally discouraged, they will think more reasonably and leave the median alone.

Fayza Hassan

Sufra Dayma

Dried broad beans and meat stew

Ingredients:

1 packet of dried broad beans
1 kilo of beef chunks
1 kilo tomatoes (skinned and diced)
1 large onion (chopped)
1 bunch parsley (finely chopped)
1 tbsp. crushed garlic
salt + pepper + allspice

Method:

Wash the broad beans and soak them in hot water for 1 hour, then boil them until slightly tender (do not overcook). Strain them and set aside. Fry the onion in butter until yellowish brown, then add the garlic. Season the meat and stir fry it with the onion and garlic until it browns, then add the diced tomatoes and the paste, season, cover and simmer until sauce thickens. Add the beans, stir them in and continue cooking under low heat until beans are soft *and meat is cooked.* Remove from heat and add the parsley immediately. Stir it in and cover allowing it to tenderise in the heat of the stew. Serve with rice and green salad.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

Restaurant review

The chicken that got away

Cecilia Robertson finds that a faulty memory thwarts her intention to sample the specialty at a newly opened Oriental restaurant

The Bird Cage is a Far Eastern restaurant in the Semiramis. It specialises in stir fries. I ordered a stir fry, but I didn't get it, so the subject of stir fries at the Bird Cage will have to be shelved for the time being.

For this I must apologise, for I admit the fault was partly mine. I requested wok-seared chicken, *Szechuan-style, partly inspired by curiosity* as to what seared chicken could possibly be and partly out of a fondness for Szechuan cooking, but when I was presented with sweet and sour chicken, I failed to notice the difference.

Thus, you can see that I am to blame, since there is in fact a very great difference, but such was my greed or the animation of the conversation that I simply pounced on the sweet and sour chicken, and totally forgot my Szechuan order until the bill arrived, by which time it was too late.

Part of the responsibility for this sad omission, however, must be shouldered by the staff, who — although quite the most affable and eager-to-please team one could hope to meet — were not entirely on the ball.

For one thing, our charming waiter had a marked antipathy to the high-tech assistance of a notebook and pen and insisted on memorising our order. I have seen this done with such panache and accuracy that it leaves one's mouth hanging open in astonishment. Not so at the Bird Cage, where the waiter had to repeat our selections several times before he got it right, and *then (as it transpired) forgot them before reaching* the kitchen.

All in all, the mistake would not have been such a dire one if the rest of the meal had compensated. But it didn't. The menu (a trendy affair printed on '100 per cent hand crafted recycled paper' made by the 'poor girls of Muqattam' for that extra feel-good factor) promised great things. It includes an assortment of dishes from various South East Asian countries from Thailand to Burma, organised under category headings from chicken and duck to rice and vegetables.

We chose honey soy braised chicken wings for *starters, plus duck with ginger, the seared chick*en which sadly failed to make its appearance, and mixed vegetables and mushrooms for the main course.

None of the dishes excelled themselves. The five chicken wings (LE16) were braised to the point of blackness but otherwise had no distinguishing characteristics. The sweet and sour chicken was adequate but distinctly ordinary, in a thick orange syrup accompanied by chunks of green pepper, mushrooms, and onion. The duck was smothered in a brown sauce, and although the ginger was pleasantly sharp, the taste of the meat was entirely lost in the gravy and I even had momentary doubts as to its ducky authenticity. As for the vegetables, they again were standard fare and entirely unworthy of a LE36 price tag.

I have a long-standing grudge against five-star restaurants that seem to sit back on the laurels of their five-starness and don't bother to run the extra mile which would justify their exorbitant prices. We paid LE155 for lunch — without desserts, alcohol, coffees or even soft drinks bar a bottle of water. I concede that other people — *who had the good fortune to sample the stir fries* — were better pleased with the Bird Cage than I. But for that kind of money I expect every item on such a short, select menu to be something special.

The Bird Cage, Semiramis Intercontinental, Garden City. Tel: 355 7171

Al-Ahram Weekly

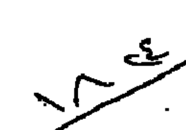
Crossword

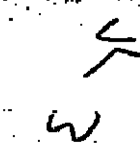
By Samia Abdennour

Across
1. Ore bed; put down (7)
7. Designate (7)
13. Justification (5)
14. Body fluid secretion (5)
15. Shoo! (2)
17. Fall in drops (4)
18. Skeletal structure (4)
19. Symbol for "selenium" (2)
20. Epic (3)
22. Lead to the altar (7)
24. Exclamation of surprise (3)
25. Latin (5)
27. Transgress (3)
28. Legends (5)
30. Bassinet (4)
31. Metal (3)
32. Device on stringed instrument to adjust pitch (4)
33. Enhance (6)
36. Dry (6)
38. Debt; disadvantage (9)
39. Alter (6)
42. Efface (6)
46. Part of Q.E.D. (4)
47. Posed (3)
49. ... of March, Roman date (4)
50. Letch; debaucher (5)
52. Initials found at bottom of some pages (3)
53. Perfume (5)
54. Abb. for French saint (3)
55. Music: in brisk time (7)
58. And not (3)
59. Of age, L. abb. (2)
60. Dutch knife (4)
61. Area now modern France (4)
63. Symbol of sodium (1)
64. Fashion (5)
65. Meant to be sung (5)
67. Oriental (7)
68. Quiddity (7)

Down
1. separate (7)
2. Maori camp or village (2)
3. Aged (3)
4. Enchantress (5)
5. A wading bird (54)
6. Cape worn by judges and clergy (6)
7. Copper colour (6)
8. Trainers (4)
9. Longs for (5)
10. Item (3)
11. That is, L. abb. (2)
12. Stab in the back (7)
16. Embellish (5)
19. Fashion (5)
21. Arab prince (4)
23. Commence (9)
24. Culture media (4)
26. Potential (7)
29. Acid, resins for plastics (7)
34. Initials on some bills (3)
35. Fodder (3)
36. Order (3)
37. Dined (3)
39. Communiqué (7)
40. Sermonise (5)
41. Point in time (4)
43. Paradise (4)
44. Mortise projection (5)
45. Dais (7)
47. An abdominal organ (6)
48. Wooden pin for fastening (6)
51. Scope (5)
53. Acidifies (5)
56. rule, jumbled (4)
57. beams (4)
60. Drunkard (3)
62. Recline (3)
64. Short for versus (2)
66. abb. of an accounting document (2)

Last week's solution





Street soccer and socks

Why pay for Nike shoes or Wilson soccer balls when the streets are overflowing with equipment. **Galal Nassar** joins in the street games that children play

There's something pleasantly refreshing about watching children play. For many observers, it is a welcome escape from their daily trials and tribulation. It's a breath of fresh air; a return to an innocence that many struggle to recall, and when they do, it is often with pangs of nostalgia.

Imagination, above all, is a child's primary means of entertaining his or herself. And for hundreds of thousands of young Egyptian working class children, for whom money is tight, imagination has merged with resourcefulness to produce a variety of street games.

Unfettered by their families' financial misfortune, and undaunted by the fact that they are not able to join sporting clubs, go to the cinema or to government youth centres, these underprivileged youths have wholeheartedly embraced the old adage, that necessity is the mother of invention. Instead of a nice grassy playing field, they have taken to the streets, the rooftops and the alleyways. And instead of costly sporting equipment with brand-name logos, they make their own, or find it lying about in discarded piles of rubble.

Egypt traditional soccer craze has not gone unnoticed by these children. On Jaafar Wali Pasha Street, a group of grimy youngsters, intent on honing their soccer skills, chase after a home-made soccer ball. But instead of a nice, round, federation-approved leather ball, theirs is made of an old sock which 13-year old Hassan Gouda, the son of a public sector employee explained, was stuffed with pieces of a mutilated plastic flip-flops or *zannouba*. The "ball", he points out, is then pressed by hand into a round shape, glued and left to dry. Voilà, the sock is now a sock-ball, or *korah sharab*. But this game, which is the most popular of the street games, is for boys only, thank you.

Gouda, elaborating on the rules of the game, said that two teams of six players face off against each other. The playing field is the street, and the goals are marked by two big stones spaced out evenly at each end. The length of the game is left open for the children to decide, but the game generally lasts as long as their interest holds. While the children sprint up and down the street, their minds drift, but only a fraction of a second, to the roaring fans in imaginary bleachers. The competition between these pint-sized punters, is as heated as any World Cup tournament.

On another street in Ain Shams Al-Gharbiya, a run-down working class Cairo neighbourhood, a band of barefooted youngsters have forsaken soccer for a more egalitarian game of hopscotch or, as it is known in street language, *el-hagla* or *el-ula*.

Using a piece of broken limestone, the children have drawn a series of back-to-back rectangles. As the competitors hop from one rectangle to the next, the excitement quickly mounts.

The rules of the game, said 9-year old Wael Shaaban, the son of a bus conductor, are fairly simple. "You have to push this stone with the side of your foot, and hop on all the squares," he said excitedly.

"But," he cautioned, "if the stone lands on the white lines instead of in the rectangle, or if your other foot touches the ground, then you're out." The game, he assured, requires a great deal of skill and physical fitness. "All that hopping can really tire you out," said Wael.

In yet another working class district, Al-Mataria, a cluster of children, less inclined to physical sports, converged on Ezzat Pasha Street for a high-stakes game of marbles. For this group of children, the triangle they have sketched on the street takes on more significance than the dice tables in Las Vegas or Monte Carlo. Stepping out of game to explain the rules, Mohamed Sayed Farshuti, the 6-year old son of a coffee attendant, pointed out, "The winner of the game is the player who manages to hit an opponent's marble, or knock it out of the triangle, with his own."

Because of the cost of the marbles, *billi*, as the game is known, is one of the more expensive street games. "I had a hard time convincing my mother to give me the few piastres I needed to buy the marbles for the game," recalled Mohamed. "But it was really important because the player with the most marbles is not only able to stay in the game longer, they are also respected the most by the others."

As the players await their turn to take a shot, looks of intense concentration come over their faces. "You have to really concentrate and be able to predict what the other players are going to do," he stressed. "It's basically a game of strategy." He also explained that each player has a style of shooting the marbles he finds most comfortable. "You can shoot the marble with two fingers or throw it with your whole hand, while standing up or sitting down."

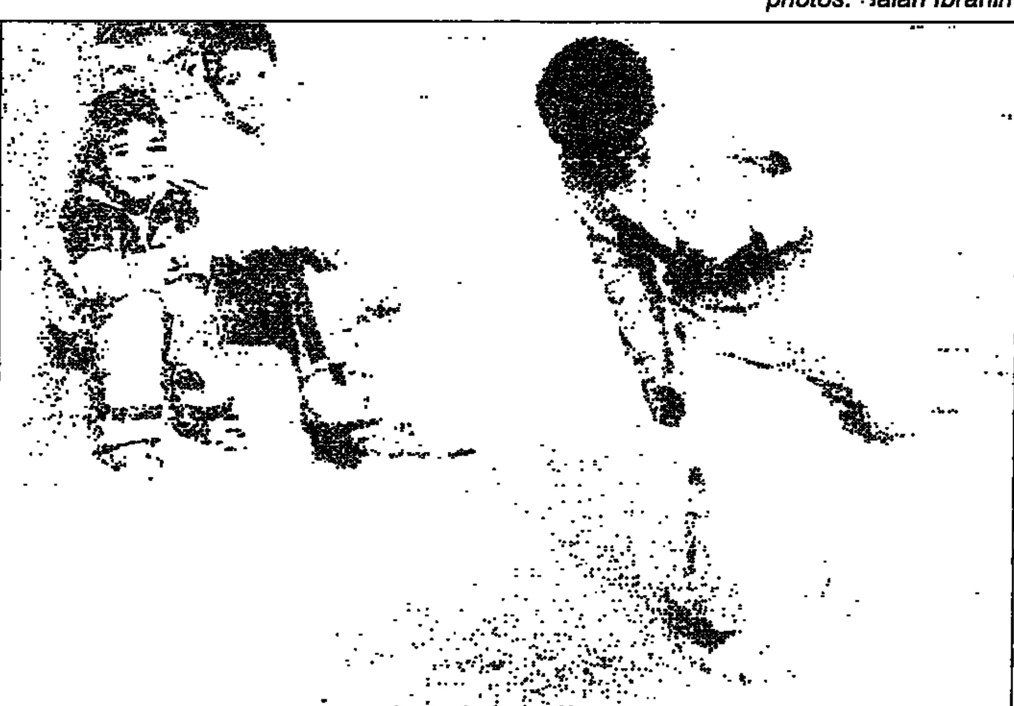
Aside from these games, there are other old favourites such as hide-and-seek and tug-of-war. These games, on the whole, are the low cost alternatives for those with little to spend. But for children from better-off families, who have more pocket money, some street vendors have set up video games featuring the Atari system, which was introduced in the early 1980s. Children are able to play by paying-by-the-minute, and if they pool their resources, hold tournaments. These privileged few are also able to rent paddles and a ball for a fast-paced game of ping-pong.

Money matters aside, the most important thing for these children are the games themselves. They provide them with an opportunity to constructively spend their leisure time, and form some lasting bonds of friendship. The games may be modest, but judging by the looks on the children's faces, no one is complaining.



photos: Salah Ibrahim





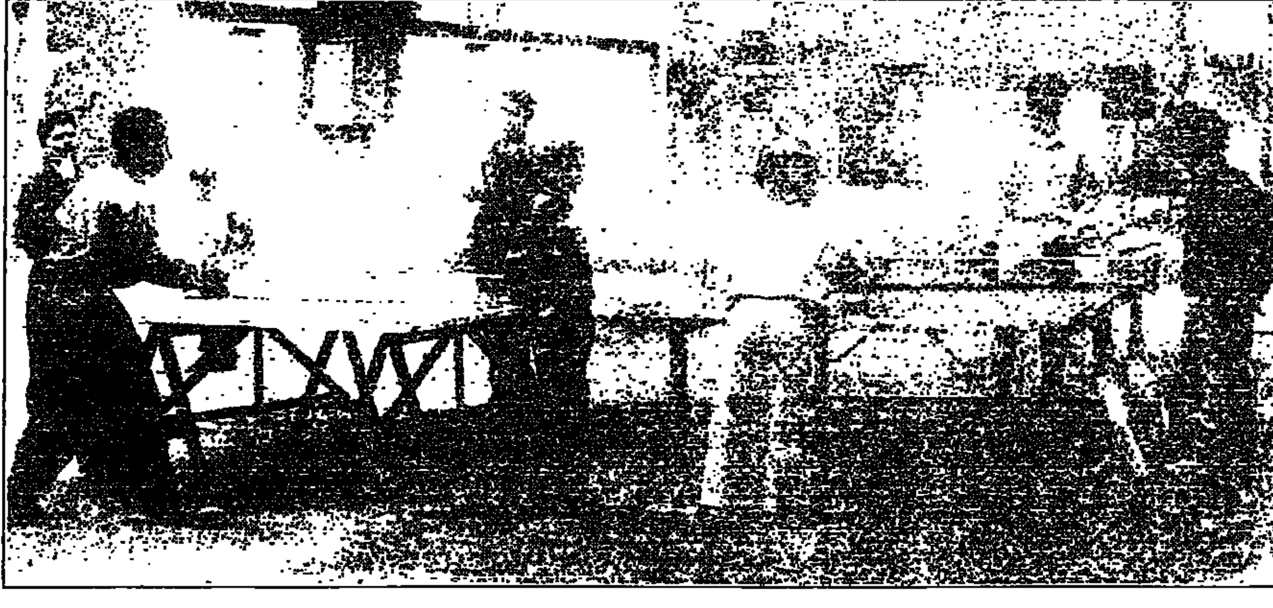




photo: Ahmed Abdel-Khaliq



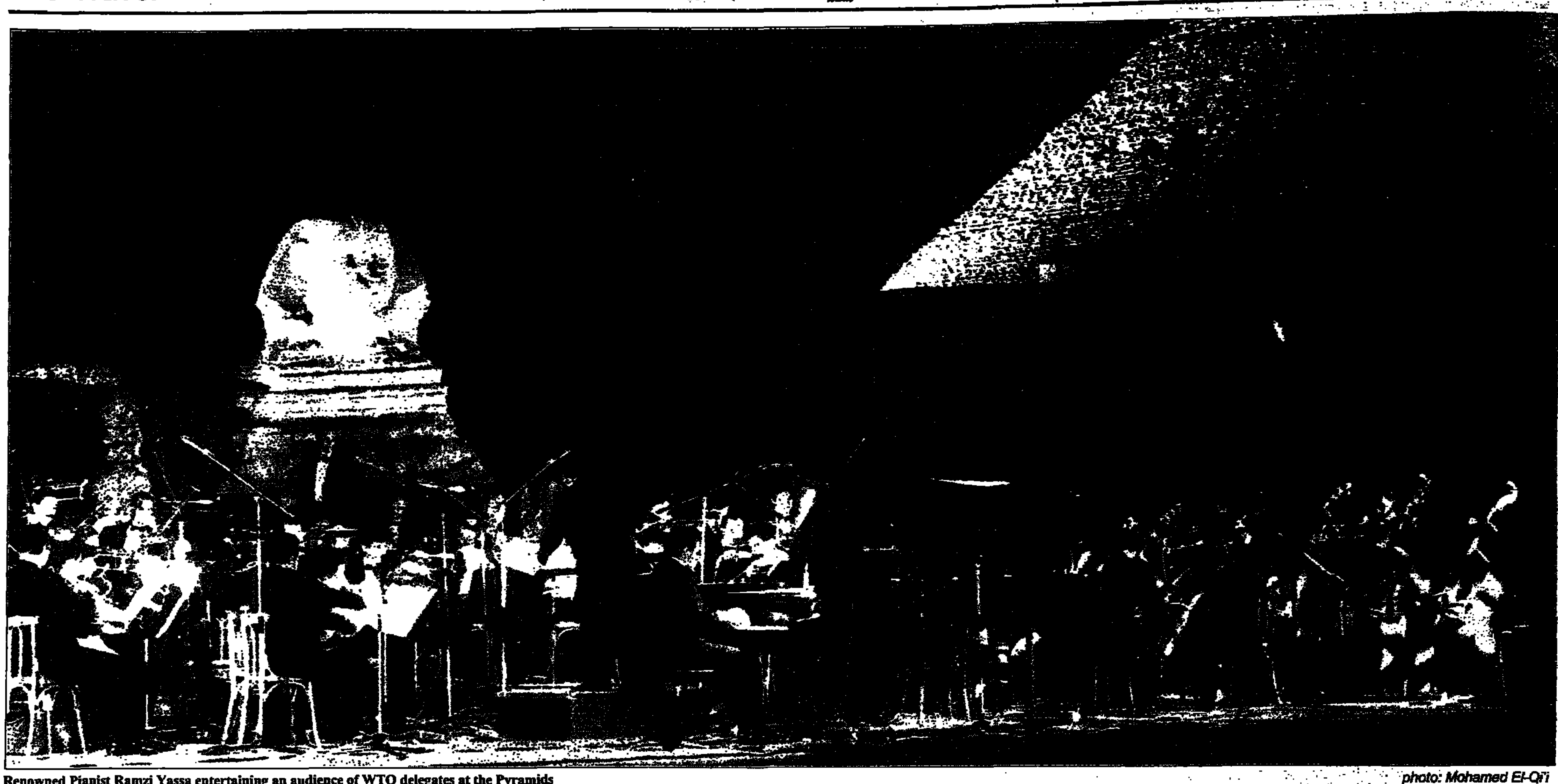


In the rough and tumble world of child's play, a group of boys chase after *korah sharab*, while others engage in a less strenuous game of *siga*. To develop their calf muscles other youngsters opt for a quick game of *ula*. Dreaming of the day when they will compete for Egypt in the ping-pong championships, these boys smash the ball back and forth while a small group of youths test their eye-hand coordination in a tension filled game of *hilli*. Future card sharks and Vegas gamblers hone their card skills as others venture into the alien-infested world of video games.

Apology

In issue 241, and in the article entitled "English for all", we inadvertantly published a typing error to the effect that the International Language Institute (ILI) employs unqualified teaching staff. This is not the case, and we unreservedly apologise for the mistake.

Edited by **Fouad El-Gawhary** and **Tarek Atia**



Renowned Pianist Ramzi Yassa entertaining an audience of WTO delegates at the Pyramids — photo: Mohamed El-Qi'i

Tourism and peace: vitally twined

Delegates from the 116 countries, together with representatives of private sector companies, gathered in Cairo for the 11th General Assembly of the World Tourism Organisation. Rehab Saad reports

President Hosni Mubarak inaugurated this week the 11th General Assembly of the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), attended by delegates from 116 countries and held in Cairo for the first time. Among the delegates were 101 ministers and deputy ministers of tourism.

"I believe that tourism and peace are twins," Mubarak said in his opening address to the assembly. "In the absence of peace there will be no tourism. Tourism fosters the opportunity for mutual understanding and peace, and it has the effect of bringing nations closer," he added.

Egypt's support for tourism, Mubarak said, was not based solely on economic interest. Tourism was also "a vital instrument in fostering opportunities for peace and stability."

"I think the Egyptian attitude coincides with your organisation's objectives, which include the promotion of relations between different cultures," he continued.

Mubarak quoted WTO statistics of a worldwide total of 528 million tourists in 1994, generating $321 billion in revenue, excluding transport costs. This, he said, "reflected the vitality of tourism as an international industry."

He stressed the role that private enterprise could now play in the Egyptian tourist industry, with the switch to a free market economy.

"Our programme aims at the modernisation of services and production, and provides unlimited opportunities to the private sector, which has priority in tourist investments. Egypt is providing the private sector with incentives to encourage it and with facilities to ensure its success."

Noting the WTO's pledge to safeguard the interests of developing countries in the field of tourism, he urged delegates to continue their efforts to fulfil this aim, especially in the case of Egypt, which is a remarkable tourist destination, with the potential for further development.

The WTO is the only intergovernmental organisation which acts as a global forum to discuss tourism policy and issues. It seeks to develop tourism as a means of fostering international peace and understanding, economic development and international trade.

The assembly, which continues until 23 October, will include sessions on tourism and technology, new marketing opportunities, improving the quality of tourist services, public-private partnerships and media relations.

This year the chairmanship of the General Assembly was transferred from the Indonesian minister of tourism to Egyptian Minister of Tourism Mamdouh El-Beltagui. Egypt will preside over the General Assembly for the next two years.

At the opening session, both Antonio Enriquez Savignac, the organisation's secretary-general, and El-Beltagui stressed the importance of peace for the development of tourism, both worldwide and on a regional level.

This was the first time the WTO General Assembly, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, had been held in the Middle East, Savignac remarked. He saw the event as a triumph both for Egyptian and Middle Eastern tourism.

"This Cairo Assembly is, in a way, a recognition of regional tourism. Tourism in the Middle East is faring well. In 1994, it accounted for more than nine million annual visitors and five billion dollars — almost 20 per cent up on the previous year."



President Hosni Mubarak, Mamdouh El-Beltagui and Antonio Savignac at the opening cermony of the 11th session of the General Assembly of WTO

Savignac was also optimistic about the future of tourism in the region. "The initial results for 1995 are promising too. Egypt's revival as the leading destination in the region, the excellent showing of the Gulf countries and Jordan, the reawakening of Lebanon and the performance of Syria all contributed to this result."

He added that WTO forecasts show that by 2000 and 2010, the Middle East should be among the regions with the greatest growth in tourism.

"Today the Middle East is enjoying the first dividends of the peace process," Savignac continued. "But tourism contributes just as much to the peace process as it gains from it. Owing to the encounters and the cultural exchange it provides, tourism in itself represents a factor in the understanding and dialogue between peoples and governments in this part of the world."

Savignac praised the Egyptian tourist industry for making intelligent use of the country's immense cultural heritage in promoting tourism. The Egyptian government and people, he said, had built up a major industry, essential to the nation's employment and balance of payments situations.

"But," he insisted, "tourism in Egypt cannot be reduced to its economic dimension alone." He added, "We should promote forms of tourism that, while creating wealth and distributing it throughout society, truly respect both mankind and the environment."

In his speech, Minister of Tourism El-Beltagui drew attention to the steady increase in Egypt's tourist traffic since 1994. "Central Bank reports indicate that tourist revenue in the fiscal year 1994-95 increased by approximately half a billion dollars over the previous fiscal year," he said. However, "We believe we are still far from claiming a fair share of the world's tourist revenue."

He also assured delegates that the chairmanship of the General Assembly was safe in his hands.

Seizing the opportunity posed by such a large gathering of tourist professionals, an international Arab tourist market is being held with the participation of 22 countries. The market has provided Egypt with a good opportunity to display its tourist assets to colleagues, including recently reopened areas like Assiut and Sohag.

Determined that delegates will enjoy their stay in Egypt, the hosts have organised a series of special entertainments including dinners, a fashion show, concerts with the Cairo Symphony Orchestra and world renowned Egyptian pianist Ramzi Yassa, together with special trips organised by Misr Travel to tourist sites in Cairo, the Red Sea, Sinai and Upper Egypt.

Rosetta Stone

Officials at the British Museum in London, talking to Omayma Abdel-Latif, ruled out any possibility of returning the Rosetta stone to Egypt to celebrate the 200th anniversary marking its discovery

Officials at the Egyptian department at the British Museum dismissed news reports that the museum would consider returning the stone, discovered by the French in 1799 to Egypt.

"I don't see any possibility of returning the stone to Egypt," Jeffery Spencer of the British Museum's Egyptology Department told *Al-Ahram Weekly* in a telephone call from London. He described as "groundless" the reports that Egypt had put forward an official request through the Foreign Office to extradite the stone.

"We have not received any requests from the Egyptian government and even if we did, there is no chance of the Rosetta Stone leaving its place in the British Museum," Spencer said. "People come from all around the world to see it here. They expect to see it here," he added.

Sources at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had earlier reported that the ministry was studying a proposal to put forward a formal request to the British government to return the Rosetta stone. Minister of Culture Farouk Hosni told the *Weekly* that "he supports efforts to retrieve it through diplomatic channels", adding that the Ministry of Culture was studying the possibility of UNESCO involvement to help facilitate its return.

The Rosetta Stone, 113cm in length, was discovered in August 1798 by a French soldier during the French campaign in Egypt. The first attempt to decipher its texts, was in 1790 when Champollion compared the heiroglyphic writing with the other two scripts engraved on its surface; the Greek and the Demotic, a late form of Egyptian writing. He did not, however, find the key to the ancient symbol writing until 1822.

Six years later, in 1828 he came to Egypt to carry out excavation works, and died in 1832, some believe, from the pharaoh's curse. The Rosetta Stone was handed to Britain as part of a peace deal between Britain and France after the latter was defeated in the Abu Qir War in 1801.

Earlier this week, a statement made by the British National Heritage Office, which referred to the stone as "British property", came under fire from Egyptian archeologists, some of whom insisted the stone should be brought back to where it belonged.

"The return of the stone to Egypt is a fair request and UNESCO conventions support our demand, because this is a rare object," said Mohammed El-Saghir, head of Egyptian antiquities at the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA). "The stone was part of a deal between the French and the British even though it belonged to neither of them," he added.

The reason that the Rosetta Stone has suddenly come into the limelight is that, four years from now, a celebration marking the 200th anniversary of its discovery is planned and the eighth Congress of Egyptology will be held in Egypt to mark the occasion.

Asked if the British Museum would consider loaning the item to Egypt on a short-term basis, Spencer said, "We will not loan any item belonging to the museum to any country. Besides, this is going to be the centerpiece of our own exhibition scheduled for 1999 marking the same occasion. We will celebrate the anniversary of its discovery too and the original Rosetta Stone will be here," he said.

Zahi Hawass, Giza Plateau director, explained that if Britain was to return the stone to Egypt, it would set a precedent that other countries would follow.

October's masterpiece

THE EGYPTIAN MUSEUM is continuing its series of month-long special exhibits in its entrance hall with an ancient water clock. Nevine El-Aref reports.

A water clock has been chosen, following the special display of the mummified remains of animals which, upon the visitors' request, lasted for five months. The water clock was found at the Karnak Temple in Luxor where priests used it to determine the time of prayers during the night. It was also an aid to setting the hour of religious festivals and feasts. The clock is a large round vessel of marble decorated with coloured reliefs featuring Amenhotep III, deities and constellations (Orion, Jupiter, Saturn and Venus).

The names of the four seasons and the numbers of the months are engraved on the upper edge. According to Mohamed Saleh, director of the museum, the inside of the vessel is divided into 12 sections with precise measurements representing the 12 hours of the night. Measurements were ascertained by a system of leakage; water inside the vessel drained through a hole at its base. Time was determined by observing the level." The water clock is a remarkable relic that deserves to be highlighted," commented Saleh.



photo: Sherif Sonbol

Keep trying

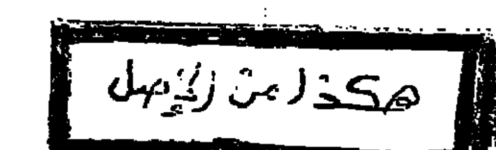


Here is the third question of October quiz:

A famous English novelist wrote a book entitled *A Thousand Miles up the Nile*, in 1877. Do you know her name?

Name...
Address...
Tel. No. (if available)..
Answer to Question 1, issue 241
Answer to Question 2, issue 242
Answer to Question 3, issue 243
Answer to Question 4, issue 244

Post your entry to
Travel Quiz
Al-Ahram Weekly,
Al-Ahram,
9th Floor,
Sharia Al-Galaa,
Cairo.







هكذا من الأصل

Punters and gatherers

As Ahli crumbles and the Ismailis face some tumbles, the Egyptian Football Federation plans and bumbles. **Ahmed Said** reports




Admiring the shorts of an Ismaili player, an Asec team member reaches out to feel the material. The Ismaili player, however, is intent on scoring *photos: Mohamed Wassim*

Over the past few weeks, it was the best of times and the worst of times for Egyptian soccer. Competing in both the Arab Cup and the African Champions Cup, the Egyptian teams came away with mixed results.

For Egyptian soccer champions, Ahli, their performance in the Arab Cup in Tunisia can best be described as a comedy of errors. In only four games, Ahli scored a total of 14 goals. Unfortunately, seven of them were on their own goal.

After only 27 minutes of Ahli's first match, which was against Saudi Arabia's Al-Riad Club, the team's goalie and captain, Ahmed Shobeir, welcomed the Saudi blitz on his goal with open arms, allowing them two goals and forcing his team to work twice as hard to even the score at 2-2.

The next two matches against Syria and Dubai's Al-Nasr Club were a welcome reprieve for the team. The festivities, however, were short lived. In the fourth match, which was against Tunisia's Africa Club, Ahli walked away with their worst defeat since 1963 when they were beaten 5-1 by Tersana in a league game. Tunisia slipped through the Egyptian defence, and deposited the ball four times in Ahli's goal. The score was 4-1 in Tunisia's favour.

With Ahli thoroughly disgraced, Egypt's hopes for face-saving efforts fell on the Delta's Mahala team. Skillful teamwork won the team second place in the Group A competition. Drawing on extra reserves of adrenaline, Mahala defeated Algeria's Ein Melila 1-0 and Jordan's Al-Faisali Club, 2-0, to earn a place in the semi-finals.

Finally, in the match against Tunisia's Africa Club, the opportunity for revenge presented itself. While the Egyptians played with a vengeance, and tied the score by the end of the match, in a tie-breaking overtime, Gamal Al-Sherif, the Syrian referee, awarded the Africa club a controversial penalty which pushed the team to victory.

The finals of the Cup were 100 per cent Tunisian, with the match being played between Negm Al-Saheli and the Africa Club.

With the hopes for winning the Arab Cup a second consecutive year now yesterday's news, experts predicted that Egypt's Ismaili Club would help regain some of the face Egypt lost. The experts were wrong.

Although the Ismailis had triumphed over Tunisia's Taragis, their narrow 1-0 victory over Asec of Abidjan means that the margin for error in the next match between the two teams is minuscule.

To take home the African Cup, as they did in 1969, the Ismailis will have to muster their forces to counter the more skillful and physically fit Asecs. The Asecs, who will next play the Ismailis on their home turf, only have to score two goals to walk away with the cup.

Expert speculation and fan dreams aside, the results to date have placed the standard of Egyptian soccer in sharper focus. The problem, it seems, goes back to policies adopted by the Egyptian Football Federation (EFF). While Europe's national leagues have finished their first quarter, Egypt's teams have barely made their debut. Consequently, the Egyptian players are physically and tactically out of shape, and are not able to hold their own against other professional teams.

The first week of games for the soccer leagues served to highlight this fact. In five games, only six goals were scored and the quality and quantity of the passing by the Egyptian teams was poor. For example, in the Zamalek-Shebin league match, both teams failed to complete more than five or six quick ball exchanges. With this kind of performance now the norm, hopes of winning the 4th African Nations Cup are little more than pipe dreams.

The EFF does not seem to realise this. Just two months before the finals, the federation is introducing a new coach, but this may be too little too late. The coach will not have time to work with the players who will also be unfamiliar with his strategy and coaching technique. Time is of the essence, but more so, a direction must be chosen before Egyptian soccer finds itself headed into the abyss.

Riders on the sand

The tranquillity of the Sinai Desert is shattered by the thundering pads of hundreds of camels and cheering Bedouin. **Nashwa Abdel-Tawab** reports from Al-Arish

It may not have been a day at the races in Ascot, but for the Bedouin tribes in Sinai, the 5th Camel Festival was just as important. Instead of top-hats and summer dresses, the standard garb was the *galabiya*. And instead of the picnics with delicate cucumber sandwiches and fine French wines, they camped on the sand, ate dates and listened to Bedouin Nabati poetry surrounded by hundreds of camels.



Eight lanky legs kick up a cloud of sand as two riders vie for the lead *photo: Hassan El-Touni*

The race, which was first held five years ago, is for thoroughbred camels of a specific blood-line such as the Khaina camels, or "traitors", so named because they get off to a slow start, but break out ahead by the end of the race.

This year, the race's third as an official competition, members of 12 different Bedouin tribes from North Sinai, South Sinai, Ismailia, and Al-Sharqia governorates participated, all of whom were eager to recreate part of their heritage while showing the Arab tribes of the Nefud Desert in Saudi Arabia that they could be beaten at their own game.

"Before this competition was formally introduced, these races and poetry readings were mainly staged at social events such as marriages," said Youssef Mubarak, manager of the Sinai camel race. "But we now aim to hold these races to help the tribes improve their standard in relation to the Arab tribes. More or less, they are the equivalent of national league or cup championships."

Unlike their Egyptian counterparts, the Arab tribes have formally held these races for almost 15 years. They begin training their camels at the tender age of two. "We can't start training the camels before they are four," said Mubarak. "At two years of age, the camel begins to move freely, by three, we take it away from its mother and get it used to having a rider on its back. By four, it is ready to be trained for racing," he added.

Money is also a factor. As the Arab tribes have more to spend, they can begin to train the camels at an earlier age, feeding them a diet of dates which helps them control their weight. Egyptian camels are fed a less-expensive diet of wheat and barley.

To be eligible to participate in the race, the camels must be from four to nine years old. As most of the camels do not have their date of birth recorded, the Bedouin look at their teeth to determine their age.

Prior to the race, the camels are placed on diets to lower their weight and increase their speed. But in many cases, the races are held in January, within the three month period when the camels are fasting.

While sitting in the sun, the Bedouins recite traditional poetry and recall with pride the noble bloodlines of some of the competing camels. Unlike their proletarian counterparts who shlep tourists by the Pyramids, these camels are the offspring of a breed of "warrior" camels who braved mines and missiles to carry soldiers across the desert during the 1967 and 1973 wars. In the 1967 War, the same camels which carried rocket propelled grenades on their humps, brought back the bodies of 100,000 injured, weary and defeated soldiers.

Over the years, the Sinai festival has taken on new significance. While providing the Bedouin with an opportunity to celebrate their tradition and heritage, the races have also drawn an influx of tourists from the Gulf countries.

Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble

A new treatment for sports injuries may be just what the doctor ordered, or it may be a bust

When a German doctor claimed to have stumbled across a revolutionary treatment for sports injuries, all ears pricked up.

Dr Hans W Muller-Wolfhart, recently appointed to the medical staff of Germany's national soccer team, has devised a treatment named, "cellular therapy".

Muller-Wolfhart claims that by injecting the injured area with cells from calf fetuses, along with amino acids, enzymes and honey extract, inflammations will be reduced and muscle tissue will be produced at a faster pace, thereby accelerating the healing process.

The procedure, he stated, is not dangerous as only soluble parts of the cell's cytoplasm are used. In addition, the risk of allergic reactions is diminished by the use of small test doses prior to commencing on the comprehensive treatment programme.

The procedure, at which some skeptics have scoffed, has already developed some faithful followers such as Boris Becker, who visited the German doctor three times before the Wimbeldon finals.

Another convert to the treatment is Dr Ahmed Seif, general-manager of the Qasr Al-Aini University Hospital and doctor for the Tersana soccer team. Treatments which focus only on the afflicted area, he said, do not affect other parts of the body, unlike those medications taken orally or intravenously. In addition, should complications arise, they will be evident only in the treated area.

Seif is also encouraged by the use of honey extract in the therapy which, he noted, is now being used extensively in a variety of treatments, including those for third-degree burn victims.

The only stumbling block may be the use of amino acids. Seif cautioned that these muscle-development accelerators must be used in limited doses that are not absorbed by the whole body, thereby mirroring the effects of steroids.

But Dr Edmond Takla, head of the International Weightlifting Federation's medical committee, argued that the treatment may not be effective for some whose bodies reject the cell transplant.

Additionally, the nature of the injury must be taken into account, he said. "If muscle tissue production is excessive, a scar tissue could develop, tightening the muscle and, in the long run, hinder muscle action."

"This treatment is one of the many discoveries which pop up now and then, but it will never be accepted internationally," he stated.

Takla is a strong proponent of the "ice it and rest it" school of sports medicine. While being the only treatment proven to be successful, it also prevents the formation of blood clots.

Witches brew or miracle cure; the answer lies in whether or not the treatment will be accepted by the International Olympic Committee.

"As officials, we stick only to international standards," stressed Dr Sayed Khashaba, head of the Sports Medicine Centre and deputy head of the International Federation of Sports Medicine.

Reported by ***Amira Nabil***

Great speedballs of fire

Searing serves and explosive swings helped propel upcoming players past some top-seeded opponents. **Eric Asomugha** reports

In a startling upset victory in the National Speedball Championships, Nasr City Sporting Club's Nageh Ali snatched the solo speedball title from the hands of top-seeded players like Neir Dawa, Osama Fawzi and Razik Saber.

Racking up a staggering 524 points in just four minutes of fast-paced action, Ali, the only right handed-starter, drilled eight successive finalists to submission through a combination of savvy, skill and powerful two-fisted backhands.

The upsets did not stop there. As fate would have it, tournament favourite, Mustafa Kamel, fought tooth and nail for his second place finish. On his way to the silver, Kamel was plagued by a series of mishaps such as the repetition of the 4th position play and a broken string.

Nonetheless, he succeeded in earning 126 points in just 60 seconds to finish with a total of 522 points, 17 below his unbroken record. Salama Mohamed took the bronze with 512 points while Neir Dawa's 510 point finish earned him 4th place, his poorest finish in three years.

In the singles competition, Mohamed Farouq used his skill and high angle returns to breeze past Ahmed Sherif, a player with similar techniques.

But what's good for the goose is not necessarily good for the gander. In the singles finals, Mohamed Salama of the Zohour Club prevailed over Farouq, snatching the gold in three sets, 5/10, 10/3, 10/6. As a power player, Salama utilised his scorching serves and smashes to avoid prolonged rallies with the more skilled Farouk.

Although former national and world solo and singles champion Neir Dawa flopped in his two strongest events, some rays of light did shine through. With team mate Wael Issa, Dawa retained the men's doubles title, and with new team mate, Hind Mohamed, he won the gold in the mixed doubles competition.

Former Sekka Hadeed star, Radwa Sharqawi, who defected to the Nasr City Club, held onto her doubles title by dumping her sister, Randa, and teaming up with the young up-and-comer, Okid Mohamed.

For the Ismaili Club's Omayma Abdel-Hamid, her best wasn't good enough. Plagued by a series of line touches and weak returns, Abdel-Hamid couldn't hold her own against Sharqawi's explosive serves in the women's singles competition. Sharqawi won the match in two straight sets, 10/2, 10/5. While this was Abdel-Hamid's second consecutive year of loss to Sharqawi, she continues to be the Nasr City star's worst nightmare in the solo competition.

The Zohour Club came away boasting most gold medals, followed closely by Meit Ghamr. Defending champions, the Heliopolis Club, took third.

"We have good players, but our biggest problem is that not enough of them are women. In the countryside, they don't allow women to play. This has seriously affected our competitiveness," said Ali Gomaa.

But for the defeated players, the issue was not so clear cut. "Who would have ever predicted that Nageh Ali and Salama would win gold medals while players like Dawa, Fawzi, Karim and myself would not," said Ahmed Sherif. "This has never happened before. Things are really changing."

While some of the players reeled from shock at the surprising conclusion to the championships, members of the national team, joined by the new winners and some top seeded players, were training in a closed camp for the upcoming world championships to be held in Cairo this month.

Among the countries participating in the world championship will be France, Nigeria, Austria, Denmark, Slovenia, Japan and Egypt.

No one to rally around

FOR THIRTEEN years, the Pharaoh's Rally was considered the world's second most challenging desert rally, the first being the Paris-Dakar race. It boasted, along with breathtaking scenery, a gruelling 2,000km course from Al-Alamein in the northwest of Egypt to Aswan in the south. But obstacles unforeseen by the race's organisers have led to its cancellation this year, writes Eman Abdel-Moeti.

The root of the problem can be traced back to the new monitoring devices scheduled to replace the old system of check points. While the course would still be divided into stages, explained Rami Siag, the organiser of the event, "instead of reaching specific checkpoints, the cars would be obliged to stop at seven o'clock, wherever they are on the course."

"New monitoring devices would then transmit the number of the car and its location to the rally's headquarters and the helicopters supervising the race," Siag added. "Unfortunately, the International Automobile Club did not approve the idea," he said. The organisers did not have a back-up plan ready.

But while participants in the Pharaoh's Rally may be disappointed, Sherif El-Sakkaf is busy revving his engine. Sakkaf will be participating in the 9th Round of the Supersport Trophy, one in a series of races held throughout Europe. With a number of races under his belt, Sakkaf is optimistic about his chances for this round. He will team up with Philippe Charriol, the French auto-racing star.

Edited by **Inas Mazhar**

World Cup worries

The biggest challenge facing the men's volleyball team in Tunisia may be their own egos. **Abeer Anwar** reports

Spirits were soaring for the members of the Egyptian men's volleyball team, which flew last week to Tunisia for the African Nations Cup Qualifications (ANCQ), but Pittera Carmelo, their Italian manager, predicts that it may not be smooth sailing.

Still high from their gold medal performance in the All Africa Games, members of the team said they were ready for the tough competition that lies ahead. The ANCQ, which began on 13 October and will last until 21 October, is the qualifying competition for November's World Cup in Japan.

"From the beginning of the year, we've been training hard for this event," said national team captain Hani Meselhi. And with the women's team already qualified for the World Cup, the pressure is now on for the men to perform.

The team will compete against Tunisia, Algeria, Nigeria, Morocco and Kenya. The first and second place winners will automatically move up to the World Cup.

While they have been training for two months in the Olympic Centre camp, and have played a number of exhibition matches with other countries, Pittera Carmelo, the Italian expert hired to coach the team, still has some worries.

In an exclusive interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Carmelo expressed his concern that "the All Africa Games have given the players the impression that this competition will be as easy. This is not the case."

"The team has developed tremendously over the course of the training sessions, but they are at times too over-confident," he said.

The key to success in Tunisia, he maintained, is for the players to remember the forces that motivated them to win in Zimbabwe. "We are playing to win, not to place in the top three," Carmelo stressed.

In the 10th African Nations Volleyball Cup in Tunisia, Egypt beat Algeria 12-15, 15-9, 15-11 and 15-10. In its second match, Egypt thrashed Kenya in three straight sets, 15-9, 15-8 and 15-6.

Bahaa Taher:

A question of memory

"Let me tell you a story..." Stories of the past, and the past of the past. He has returned, after years abroad — and the past is different



photos: Sherif Sonbol

"People forget." That is Bahaa Taher's answer to why he thinks *Al-Hubb fi'l Manfa* (Love in Exile) has created such a stir among Egyptian readers. They forget that not so long ago they spoke in the same glowing terms, if not more favourably, about other novels by other authors or by the same author: *Qalit Doha* (Doha Said, 1985) and *Khalti Safiyya wa'l-Deir* (Aunt Safiya and the Monastery, 1991), two of Taher's novels selected in a readers' poll as best novel of the year.

What is it about *Love in Exile* that stirred its readers? Taher claims that he is not qualified to say and instead refers to other writers, including Edward El-Kharrat — who "said 'one felt ashamed of having forgotten an important moment in history — the Sabra massacres of which the novel reminded us'."

Set in a European city just before and at the very beginning of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, *Love in Exile* has as its protagonist-narrator an ageing Egyptian journalist who falls in love and has an affair with a European woman young enough to be his daughter. In spite of himself, the protagonist finds that he must take firm political stands — whether by writing about the Sabra massacres or by refusing to work for a journal sponsored by a Gulf emir who is an arms dealer. Permeating the narrative are flashbacks to the narrator's previous marriage and family life in Egypt and long discussions about past political events with his friend Ibrahim, an Egyptian journalist based in Beirut. The novel, as Taher says, is "a question about memory, a question about the past's judgement of the present and the present's judgement of the past."

When Bahaa Taher speaks of the future, he looks away as if addressing ghosts, as if the future has already exhausted its possibilities. You would think he was in his late 80s by the way he talks about himself. He isn't. He has 30 years to go. He is gaunt, smokes and is certainly not a picture of youthful vitality. But then, neither are undergraduates who major in history, are left of centre and on the side of the oppressed. When he focuses on what is at hand and makes eye-contact, he is a pensive and cautious conversationalist. When he speaks of the past, of his own childhood, the haunted quality disappears and he becomes vivacious — almost boyish — uses his hands while he speaks and laughs from the heart.

He studied history at Cairo University. This, in spite of getting scores far above the minimum needed to enter the then more chic faculties of English or French and despite his own desire since childhood to become a writer. Arab novelists, Taher believes, "should focus on dramatic historical moments... the memory of literature is livelier than that of historical chronicles. Napoleon in Russia makes you think of Tolstoy, the Spanish Civil War, of Hemingway."

All Taher's novels are firmly rooted in specific historical contexts. His first novel *Sharq Al-Nakhil* (East of the Palm Trees), set during the 1973 Cairo student demonstrations, has as its protagonist an alcoholic student who had come from his village full of political ideals and who can only, at the time the novel is set, watch on as his flatmate Samir dodges police surveillance and arrest to help organise the demonstrations. In *Doha Said*, set in Nasser's Egypt, the protagonists' inner lives and love lives are inseparable from their political identities. Though at the surface far from politics, *Aunt Safiyya and the Monastery* — interestingly the only Taher novel translated into English (forthcoming: University of California Press) — nevertheless sees the intrusion of the 1967 War into the village where the novel's events unfold.

Taher's characters discuss politics, are arrested, betray their comrades, sell out to the staus quo, stand firm and pay a price, and so on. A Western reader in the 1990s might see his novels as "too explicitly political". This, given the cultural context in which they were produced, is not true. In Egypt people talk and joke about politics — even at intimate family get-togethers. University students, taxi drivers, grocers, all still get into heated Nasser-vs-Sadat discussions. The fact that readers in their 20s identified with the characters of *Love in Exile* who in 1982 try to fathom the "secrets" of the things that happened in 1969 amazes Taher. He should not be surprised. After all, he did create for the novel a narrator who reflects bemusedly on how his fellow Egyptians discuss Port Said as if it was still under British siege today.

Though Taher's novels sensitively capture the spirit of the times in which they are respectively set, they are not merely documentary period pieces. They have their epic moments. Perhaps the most moving of such moments in Taher's corpus occurs at the heart of *East of the Palm Trees*. Placed between two urban tales about political sacrifice and martyrdom is a flashback to another tale — one which is set in the village: the protagonist's cousin Hussein and his uncle step out of the mosque after the Friday prayers; Hussein steps in front of his father to protect him from the guns of the family trying to usurp their land; Hussein dies in his dying father's arms. "The son's blood returned to the father," the protagonist remembers his mother's words, "and they both returned to the dust of the earth — pure with ablution and prayer."

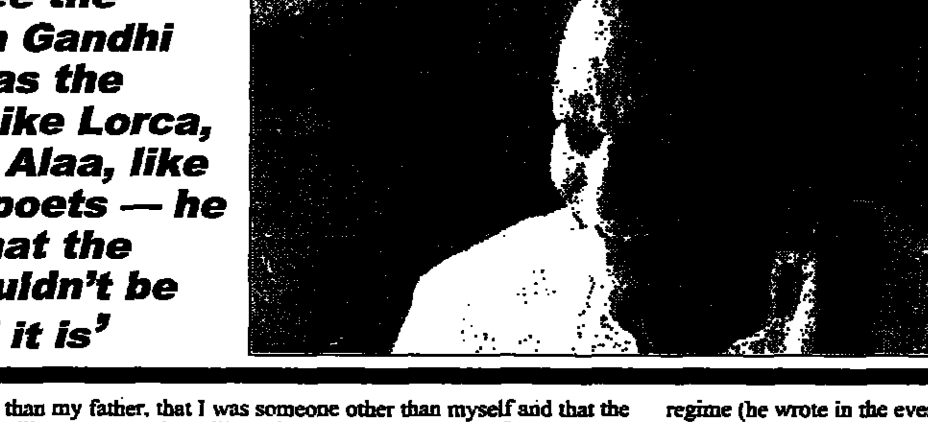
The village in Taher's novels, though "realistically" portrayed, is also the past from which things originate. The tale of Hussein's death — embedded in a flashback — is the seed from which the novel germinated; this seed had its source in Taher's mother, who, in turn, was stubbornly rooted to her past: "My mother always told this story. It seems she was related to them — everyone in the village is related. The event shook her and it was inscribed in my mind since childhood. I am indebted to her for my love of writing — even though she herself was illiterate — and the love of the Sa'id which lived in her, long after she left it for Cairo when she was 15. Everything for her after 15 — and she lived till she was 80 — was marginal. Her life *was* those 15 years. Till she died, she reckoned the months according to the agricultural calendar. She never used the *Hijra*, let alone the Julian calendar: Bashans, Baramhat, Touba, Amshir..." He laughs heartily... "This is a kind of Sa'idi stubbornness — this clinging to the roots..."

Novels born of a past of a past: stories told to Taher when he was a child by a mother who lived in her own childhood more fully than in her present. A love of history rooted in a belief in the "unity of human misery" regardless of class or creed. "Some people think about history in an abstract way but all ideas — Values, Culture, Thought ...etc.— are paid for in blood... I am" — Taher is emphatic — "against abstractionist thinking. No idea is worth the blood of a single person."

A return to childhood provoked by the question "Have you ever read Gandhi?" "Ghandi? Da Ghandi habibi! I'll tell you a story." — he chuckles the way people do when embarking on a narrative of the days when they sowed their wild oats — "but don't publish this" (later, he would be persuaded otherwise). " One of the works that most influenced me were Gandhi's memoirs which I read when I was 16. I was so affected by them that, from the age of 16 to 18, I was a vegetarian. My parents thought I was crazy, my mother nearly died, *I* nearly died..." He laughs; this is the past and the past for Taher is a time for laughter and not forgetting "...I've always been frail and I had a severe case of anemia. The doctor said he respected my beliefs but I had to eat meat or die. I ate meat... I don't see the politics in Gandhi as much as the poetry. Like Lorca, like Abu'l-Alaa [Al-Ma'arri], like all great poets — he wished that the world wasn't the world it is. And they always end with a bullet... with a defeat far worse than a bullet." Gandhi was a politician too, one who did not believe in defeat and never tired of fighting. "I went to India four times, looking for Gandhi. Never found him. If he was there, India wouldn't be today's India, full of hatred, inter-ethnic strife, blood... In any case what people say about Nasser, that he wasn't merely Egyptian but belonged to all Arabs is true of Gandhi — he belonged to humanity as a whole... His is still a distant dream, a very distant dream. Maybe people are convinced of his ideas... but the world is a bad place."

In *East of the Palm Trees*, the narrator/protagonist says that he had wanted to tell his cousin — the one who would soon die in a shower of bullets — that "this beautiful dream [of peacefully resolving the feud] presupposed that my father was someone other than my father, that I was someone other than myself and that the village was another village, its people another set of people." In "Ana'l-Malik Geit" ("I, the King, Have Come"), a long short story in the collection bearing that title, the protagonist Farid follows a very distant dream till the (bitter?) end. Of all of his works, "I, the King, Have Come" is Taher's favourite.

'I don't see the politics in Gandhi as much as the poetry. Like Lorca, like Abu'l Alaa, like all great poets — he wished that the world wouldn't be the world it is'



It is the least entangled in history — or politics. In 1932, so the plot goes, successful occulist Farid decides to journey into the desert. This, after having lost to insanity his beloved Martine whom he had met as a student in Grenoble, who had visited him in Egypt and who was betrothed to him. In her last letter to Farid, which foreshadows her insanity, she complains of how the light pains her eyes. Life goes on; he publishes a series of successful papers; his practice flourishes — then, in 1931 he publishes a paper entitled "Visual Memory and Inherited Knowledge" which hints at the possibility of a memory that extends back before birth. The paper does not go down well. The desert calls him. He travels southwest in search of an oasis he knows does not exist; the image of Martine haunts him; he is abandoned by companions and camels... until, alone, he is left in an undiscovered ancient Egyptian temple dedicated to the Sun God. As his supply of water dwindles, he puts together the ancient text on the walls, a prayer to the God of Light, using as his key a touristic memento he and Martine had picked up in a bazaar and on which is inscribed in hieroglyphics "Farid loves Martine."

Does Taher like this story because of its stubbornly inconclusive ending? The hero is both defeated and undefeated — like poets who wish the world was another world. He is stubborn in his insistence, despite protestations, to follow the call of the desert — like *East of the Palm Tree*'s grandfather knight figure who dares to venture beyond the palm trees and into the desert to find good soil. Like the author's mother, Farid is possessed of a stubborn memory and haunted by a ghost from the past — that of Martine, who, in turn, it seems Farid suspects, is haunted by ghosts of an ancient past. If politics and recent history are suppressed in this story (and perhaps another reason why Taher likes this story best is that it is his least "political") it returns viciously in the last deciphered word, "great" — "I, the great king, came" — and shatters the hero's dream of a peaceful, a-historical quietus in which he can be reunited with his beloved.

Perhaps Taher likes this story best because the greatest of actions in the plot development is the construction of a text. With a personal souvenir as a key the protagonist, alone, reinscribes a history, translates a text authored by a king who, alone, discovered his Beloved, the origin of all things.

Reflecting on his career as a translator, Taher says that "there has to be a point when one says stop. I have seen very talented people killed by this kind of work." During his last year at Cairo University Taher worked as translator for the Information Department. He didn't like what he translated, but kept his views to himself. After graduation in 1957, a job with Egyptian radio's cultural programme which was just being established came his way. He took it up eagerly — because it was far from politics. Then, for 20 years, he worked again in translation, this time for the UN — for the first five years as a free-lancer mainly in Rome and Vienna, then for 15 years in Geneva. Of his impressions of Switzerland, he says very firmly "I worked for the UN in a very cosmopolitan set-up. I cannot say I got to know the Swiss well enough to pass any judgement."

Despite the gruelling nature of his work as translator in Geneva, Taher insisted on a strict writing regime (he wrote in the evenings, after work) even if it was at the expense of his health and nervous system. It was during the years he spent in Switzerland that he wrote *Bi'l-Ams Halimtu Bik* ("Last Night I Dreamt of You"), *I, the King , Have Come*, *Aunt Safiya and the Monastery* and *Love in Exile*. Well aware of the trap of needs escalating to keep up with salary increases, Taher decided that enough was enough, did not try to renew his contract with the UN, retired and returned to Egypt. In this connection Taher mentions the Tolstoy character who takes up the devil's offer to run from sunrise to sunset along the circumference of the piece of land that would be his... and ends up finally owning a large grave — his own.

Taher has been back in Cairo for four months. He has not yet settled down. He finds that his time is frittered away by all kinds of details. When asked about whether he plans to write film scripts (his novels would lend themselves to cinema) he says that though he respects the genre, it is too late for him to start anything new. He has, however, considered turning one of his long short stories, *Muhawrit Al-Gabal*, ("Mountain Dialogue") into a monodrama and wishes he could get around to writing some plays (his very first publications were two one-act plays). He is currently working on a novel, *Hekayat Erfan Al-Kebir*, (Big Erfan's Stories), of which he has completed and published two chapters and which is set in the Sa'id.

Asked about how it feels to be home after 15 years, Taher says that the place to which he has returned is not the same place. It has — in spite of his regular visits to Egypt when living in Geneva — changed "catastrophically", beyond recognition. "Being a foreigner when you live abroad is official — you know you are a foreigner. The foreigness that is most difficult is to feel a foreigner in your own home."

Karnak the village, his parents' hometown? It too has changed drastically. And the feuding which he beautifully narrates in *Aunt Safiya and the Monastery*? He chuckles. "There's less of that today... but it still continues. Let me tell you a story" — here the persona of the melancholic old man for whom the future holds no promise is elbowed aside by the boyish one for whom past dreams are real. "My father was a teacher, an Azharite, and didn't have much to do with this feuding business. But I remember very distinctly that, when I was 14, our home in Giza suddenly had relatives from Alexandria and Suez descending upon it. There was a feud between two parts of the family in the Sa'id, and they were on their way there. Members from both sides would actually meet in our house, even eat together at the same table..." He laughs, obviously enjoying telling this story "...These visitors from Alex and Suez were all educated and made fun of the feuding. Luckily, this time things were solved peacefully. But I want to show you how this thing is so deeply rooted in the society. As soon as the order 'Come to the village, there's a feud' is given, everyone" — he laughs heartily — "the officer, grocer, businessman, everyone has to leave their work. I find something fantastic here..." He is both amazed and, one suspects from his smile, pleased by the mystery of how feuding can be a means of social bonding.

Taher has a dual persona: one which can complain bitterly about the materialism invading village life and one whose eyes sparkle at the thought of something as "archaic" as feuding persisting till today. This duality is echoed in the two father figures of *East of the Palm Trees*: the narrator's "realistic" and mean spirited father, a money lender who makes ignoble compromises, on the one hand, and Hussein's father who is brave and is killed for his stubborness, on the other. Also reflecting this duality is the oscillating structure of most of his novels between a petty urban present and a noble past in a village which, though simple, enabled heroic gestures.

Bahaa Taher wants to travel — in Egypt. He loves the desert. Though "as an Egyptian citizen who is for development etc, etc", he can see the merits of making the desert on either side of the Desert Road to Alexandria green, he nevertheless misses the awe-inspiring grandeur of a real desert where, once upon a time, you could, every now and then, catch a glimpse of a gazelle.

"I tried to escape from all that reminded me of the old conflicts and of my old self." "We feel like two ghosts from an era that has died." "Why does time pass without giving us signs of its passing?" "Maybe the signs are there but we choose to ignore them": voices from *Love in Exile*.

Whether or not he identifies with these voices or is as old as he would like you to believe, Bahaa Taher would, in any case, probably agree that "old men ought to be explorers."

Profile by ***Nur Elmessiri***



